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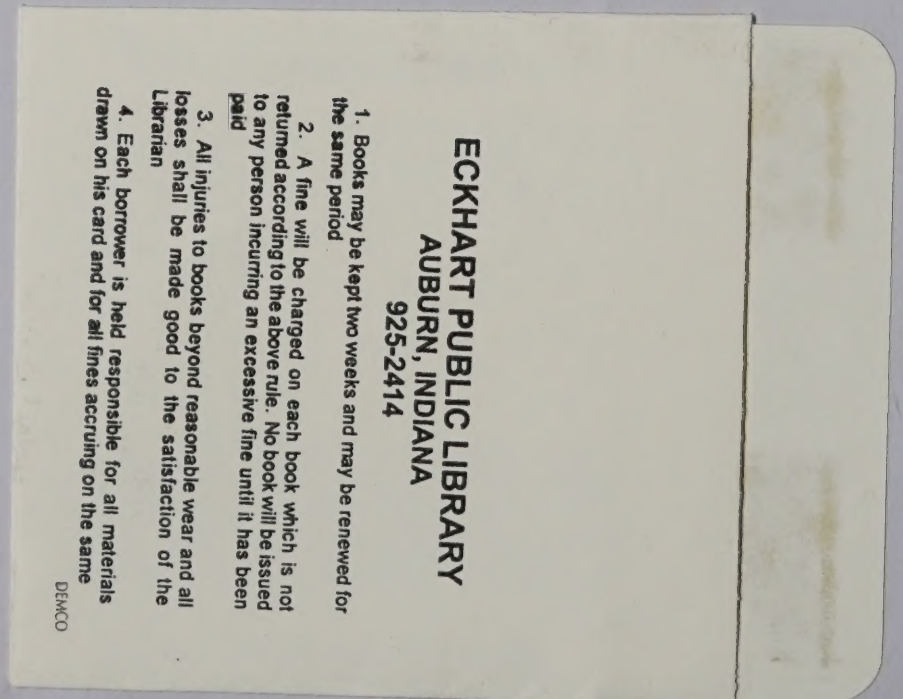
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Acknowledgments

What is a man without his friends? Well, in this case, he wouldn't be an author, about to spring his third work on the public (for this author is a perpetual reviser who would never get anything ready for the printers, left on his own). But, with the aid of a bright couple from Florence, KY, (Barry and Jenny Bartels), the material was cast onto a computer, given the benefit of the computer's art-dubbing facilities, "covered", and sent on it's merry way to the printers. "Thank you good friends," hardly seems adequate.

Similarly, debts of gratitude are owed to:

- Waanders' Bookmark, and members of the Dekalb County Historical Society -- for their assistance in marketing the works...and their considerable encouragement.
- Silas Teddy Walters (again!), and my own parents, telling what they told...and being what they were.
- The teachers of my youth, and THE TEACHER (Maude Armstrong) who gave me the grip on language that I wield with such pleasure.
- A generous public that has bought the previous works in such delightfully and unanticipated numbers.

Like he said before, "Thank you," hardly seems adequate.

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Reflections On
"On Further Reflection"

This work is the logical successor to "Auburn Reflections" which (for reasons that are beyond my ken) has enjoyed a modest success in the marketplace. It has much the same sources as "Reflections", but will differ in having no newspaper ads interspersed, fewer collaborators, and a heavier reliance on personal experience.

Both works, however, are targeted on the same audience -- readers younger than fifty who could not have seen these sights, had these experiences, or known these remarkable people -- Silas Teddy Walters, Charlie Romeiser, Charles Eckhart, et al.. What I know of these remarkable people, I am willing to share with you. And, if the over-fifty crowd enjoy them, fine. I thank you for your patronage.

To the Reader —

May you read Ch. 2 carefully — it says it all for me about Eckhart Library and Charles Eckhart, the serendipitor. May you enjoy my facts a little and my opinions a lot!

Robert L. Shuttleworth

May 9, 1996

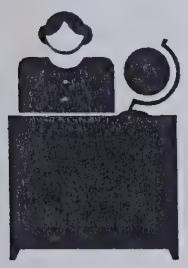
On Dying Alone in a New York Nursing Home

One of the advantages of age may be that you have the time and good sense to reflect on, and to regret, rash actions of your past. You may feel an honest melancholy over the debts that should be paid, but can never be, to others whose mortality has been proven. So it is/was with Miss Maude Armstrong.

. . . . . .

When first I met the lady, it was vicariously through the rumors of her ferocity that spread ahead of her through the Junior High. Next year, when we ascended to high school, we were in her domain. And, as she was then teaching English 10, in the year after that, we must take our 175 walks in the "Valley of the Maude"!

I have few clear memories of my Freshman year and my English teacher, Mr. Kintner. I know that a year or two after me, he joined the Army (but I'm not sure I was the cause of that!).



But, in 1939 - 40, I was Maude - fodder. I was scared; I was, to some small degree, good; and I was fortunate beyond words! For, being scared, I paid attention; having some talent in language, I "aced" her course at least a couple of the six grading periods; and having paid some attention and learned well the grammatical half of the course, I NEVER AGAIN HAD TO TAKE A COMPOSITION COURSE. (The only further work required in high school was with Miss Gladys Duguid, of whom I have little memory. In college, **I WAS EXEMPTED FROM ALL COMPOSITION BY G.E.D. TEST,** GIVEN TO ALL RETURNING VETERANS.) While others suffered the tortures of the damned -- some actually flunked out because of it! -- I went my merry way to a double major of Foreign Language w/English, and Social Studies.

And , on such a shaky foundation, I taught 34 years of English, substantially, with some degree of success. Two or three administrators were made uncomfortable about my intensity when I taught History, but never a murmur about language instruction. I didn't revel in grammar (few Teachers will!), but I seem to have been adequate, at least!

Did I emulate the lady in classroom management? Well, a "Yes" and a "No". I could, and did maintain 34 years of orderly environment for those who would learn, as did she; but no one could, pound for pound, chill the soul of the dilitary or the negligent as could she! To this very moment, repeat, " No, No, No, You can't **WAS** a fly!!!", and heads will turn and some will recognize whom you imitate.

Did she miss the affection, the adoration that some teachers evoke? Well, if she did, she wasn't the one who would have shown it. She was reputed to have spurned a proposal of marriage from a "real catch" in town life, to follow her lonely career; and by so doing, perhaps signaled the abandonment of popular emotions.

And so it came to be, they say, that when she had retired, and eventually ended in a nursing home in upstate New York...when her plight became known in Auburn and the cards and letters began reaching her, she could not understand why anyone cared about her. Well, dear "late" Lady of Language, perhaps it's because, since we met you, we cannot **WAS** a fly! Go ahead! Drink your lemon juice straight (as you did in my mother's restaurant each morning), drink your black coffee, and correct the grammar of Paradise!

Charles Eckhart's Gifts - *To Me*

There's not much reason to expect a connection between the town's greatest benefactor, Charles Eckhart, and a child such as I was, growing up during the Depression; but nonetheless there were three "points of contact", SUBSTANTIAL in my life, for which I remain forever grateful. "Uncle Charley" Eckhart died nearly 10 years before I was born, but I benefited from his generosity in my youth and remain grateful here, some 80 years after his passing. For What?

First, and possibly slightest, I benefited from his gifts of playground equipment to all of the Auburn elementary schools - DeSoto, Riley, and Harrison. Maintenance on the playground equipment was not a high priority in that age, but what remained when I got to it 25 years later was cherished by the kids - the low slung merry-go-round, the whirling circular swings, the teeter-totter, and the traditional swings. All were so configured that they had only heavy metal or sturdy wood parts and could endure any weather, seemingly. To a point, they were available in summer. No one seemed conscious of liability for their use, and I doubt that any parent would have thought to sue the schools for maintaining an attractive nuisance, had their children been injured while playing there. A simple, refreshing world?

The second gift (and far more substantial in my life) was the YMCA. For me, the contact began soon after I had rather poorly weathered a case of scarlet fever at the age of 8. The bloom had left my cheeks; the meat had left my bones. Good old Dr. L.N. Geisinger advised Mother to get me a membership at the Y and to let them build me up through exercise. Mother had misgivings; she was of a religious sect that was thoroughly suspicious of all other religious groups, and the name Young Men's CHRISTIAN Association, sounded "churchy" to her. But she overcame her misgivings, and off to the "Y" I went.

And what did we do at the Y in those days? Probably nothing so very different from now, but it was I who did it! One or two afternoons a week, and on Saturday mornings, I attended my "class" at the Y. along with most of the boys I knew in school.

First, we changed into our gym clothes...usually with the discovery that they were ripe for the laundry. The more effete among us might have brought their clean gear in a gym bag. If and when I remembered to bring anything unsullied, it would have been wrapped in a towel and carried under one arm. There, amid the odors of stale clothes, chlorine (the footbath leading to the showers), and ever present moisture (steam from the showers), we changed. The imminence of Snepp Snyder's summoning whistle limited horseplay. but we were pre-teen or early teen, and dignity was not our forte.

Up an adjacent stairway, into the gym, and into the clutches of our "musclemeister". Snepp Snyder, or one of his "graduate" minions, would lead us in the days activities.

"Let's open with some calisthentics."

"Ugh!"

"Now, let's run some laps around the gym."

"Ugh!", compounded.

"Now we'll choose up sides for a game of basketball,
volleyball,
dodgeball."

"UGH," doesn't begin to do this last choice justice. If there were 30 boys in the class, I was usually chosen 31st or 32nd. Klutz-city, me. I readily conceded all family athletic honors--at least from this floor of the Y, to my older brother. But let us but get to the pool downstairs, and I came into my own.--after the Y first taught me to swim!

So, down that same stairwell with considerably more enthusiasm, out of the reluctantly-sweated gym gear, and into the showers. "Soap, if you have it!" Rinse, and into the pool! Thinking of that pool now, it is difficult to imagine that it held so many splashers, so many belly-floppers, so much activity...so MUCH noise!...a lifeguard would be on duty--Garth Zeggenfuss, Virgil McNabb, or the like, keeping a watchful-but-bored eye on us all. Now and again, his warning whistle would sound, reminding us of some rule we had violated. I frankly don't remember anything specific now that we weren't to do. Perhaps a,

"Thou-shalt-not-drown-anyone-more-than-two-years-younger-than-yourself!"? or maybe, running.

The walls of the pool room were glazed block, so much better to reverberate the noise of our joy. We dived and shouted, belly-flopped and shouted, splashed the apron on the pool and then slid along it on our stomachs...and shouted. We crossed the pool underwater, and then mastered the FULL LENGTH of the pool (about 50') underwater; and gasped---and shouted!

Never, but never, will I develop a better definition of COLD than "the YMCA pool temperature for a week or so after draining, cleaning, and refilling from the city mains!" It was probably about 55 degrees, but after a session in that frigid water, I felt like Nanook of West 11th Street. For a fact, you did not enter that water gradually. But dip a toe in it, and you would have beat a hasty retreat to the hot showers. You must make the plunge all of one insane moment. Politely raised, you came up with a gasp. (I came up with a scream.) After that, even juvenile braggadocio couldn't keep us in the pool until that distant moment when Garth's whistle announced the end of our class. And, whenever we came out, it was with blue lips and a lust for a long, hot, hot, HOT shower. Then to the locker room, to wish that we had brought a clean, fresh towel that day. Into our clothes, up to stairs, and out into the world.

In the process, we might pass...or even loiter... in the billiards room with those who could afford the modest rental of the table. I rarely had the excess of cash or the skill to justify much table time. Oh, I did play rarely, but like my golf game (a freebie attending being a caddy), it served only to confirm my suitability for the pool. For, it must be said, I did learn to swim rather well, and given a suitable opportunity, I might have made a good competitive swimmer.

Other areas of Uncle Charley's Y also caught our attention: the dining room in the basement (later modeled into the Teen Canteen), and the "Dormitory" on the third floor. On rare occasions, the Y held some sort of function on Saturdays that entailed a lunch. I cannot recall the purpose of the luncheon, but the menu sticks in my mind as baked beans, mostly. As to the dormitory, we had no reason ever to enter the third floor, but I can remember that now and again, you would see one of the residents---usually an unmarried youngish man--crossing the mezzanine "behind the clock" and climbing the stairs to that realm. And these many years later, I have a clear memory of the lovely tones of that clock with its full-striking Westminister chimes.

Indeed, in later years when the Lions had stored some of their equipment in one of the rooms; I saw the interior of one of the rooms, and it struck me as curiously small and "institutional". But, if you needed a room for a while.....

A couple of times a year, the Y came out-of-doors: the annual picnic at Circle Park, and the ill-fated Hike to the Swarts Farm! Of the picnic, little do I remember of the transportation (probably a school bus), of the activities (probably well-supervised water activities), or anything else but the lunch. Of the lunch: the buttered-bread-and-bologna sandwiches, and the HALF BANANAS! Bananas were not that common in the '30's, and the sight of a 5 gallon lard can, filled with bananas which had been cut in half, caught my attention in a big way. Could I have maneuvered to get TWO banana halves? I'm sure I would have, could I have. I suspect that watchful eyes prevailed.

How then, to conclude the Y memories? Why, painfully, painfully! We shall hear of the YMCA Hike to Swarts Farm, a trek that shall live in infamy; for rarely has anything seemed so fair in anticipation and so foul in execution! It was, to be sure, to be a simple walk along the banks of Cedar Creek to the Swarts Farm, a distance of surely no more than two miles, even as Cedar Creek meanders. We would pack our own lunches, dine al fresco at the Farm, and return by the same route. A veritable trip to the Elysian Fields, Auburn-style, no?

When the trek came, the sun shone and the day was "exceeding fair". Off we went, and all went well for at least the first two or three hundred yards. But...but... the creek bank was rough, brush lined, and mosquito infested. Led by our resident fitness guru, the pace seemed piston-flogging. I fell back on the only defense against such travail---I ate my lunch. I am sure that it did not survive past the Auburn Country Club. The trip continued long, long after my enthusiasms had sickened, died, and been memorialized by panting and wheezes. The unaccustomed rigors of the hike made the temperature, which surely had not risen over a degree or so, seem like a tropical jungle. I sweat. I itched, I scratched mosquito bites: and had it not been a Young Men's CHRISTIAN Association hike, I would surely have painted the air from my small palette of profanity.

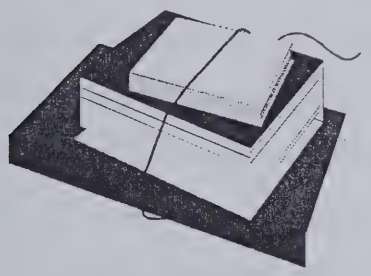
The worst nightmares do come to an end eventually, and when I felt that this one surely must be about to, I learned that were not even HALF WAY there yet! The classic author,

Xenophon, tells of an agonizing long march by ancient Greek troops (The Anabasis). Child's play...sheer child's play compared to what I felt.

Was there anything gained of this foot-slogging mistake? You betcha'!! "Never...NEVER let anyone else set the destination OR the pace for your march. Let the Snepp Snyders or any others stride out across the world: a dear old friend (who had a similar experience) and I will retire to Del Armstrong's Grocery to do justice to a half-dozen frosted rolls instead." So there!

And did I recover by robust health? Assuredly-oh, tonsillitis a time or two, but never a serious illness since!

Another gift that has lasted 60+ years for me (and approaching 85 years for his town): the Eckhart Public Library. What his YMCA couldn't do for my love (?) of exercise, his Library did for my love of reading. Perhaps immodestly, I count myself among the literate, and joyously so. With the aid of a crew of teachers and Charles Eckhart's Library, I achieved a creative mastery of the language, found education generally pleasant, and I found the Library a treasury that invited intellectual plundering and richly rewarded you for doing so!



My library card was received the same summer that I joined the YMCA (1932). I swam in the pool perhaps 3 hours a week. I swam in the worlds of literature surely at least 3 hours a day. In those first two or three summers, I was good for nearly a book a day! I came to know every fictitious dog in Albert Payson Terhune's Sunnybank Kennels: I agonized over unkind Fate's treatment of Bob, Son of Battle: of Black Beauty, in my imagination I helped Commander Elsberg raise the S-4 and the Squalus, (and later clear the scuttled Italian ships for the ports of Eritrea.) I dived the abyssal depths with Beebe and froze with Byrd at the South Pole. In joyous reaction to a movie version of Well's The Shape of Things to Come, I consumed his Time Machine and War of the Worlds, the latter BEFORE Orson Welles and his Mercury Theater seized upon it. Oddly enough, I found no great charm in Mark Twain or Booth Tarkington, although I did read some of them. (I did like Rumblin Galleries).

Fate or heredity has endowed me with a sticky memory; Charles Eckhart's legacy helped me to stock the shelves from which I, later an English teacher, could sell good literature to the students. A great part of that stocking took place before I reached high school . There I did

have good teachers, but the compulsion to plod the path of Silas Marner, The Lady of the Lake, The Idylls of the King, Caesar, and MacBeth slowed my use of the Library a bit. Oh, to be sure, it supplemented the school library in satisfaction of book reports. And, for as long as I was a youth, it was my principal exposure to periodicals. One could pour over the *Colliers*, the *Boy's Life*, the *Liberty*, and the *National Geographic* WITHOUT the prospect of Clyde Andrew G. nosing over your shoulder (as he might in the school library). And, there were certain things we were immensely curious about that only *Geographic* could show. At Eckhart, you were safe as long as you didn't do something that caused Miss Mayfield to "Shush" you.

I graduated in '42, and by the time I got back to Eckhart ('51), the era of the paperback was beginning, as was an era of prosperity. For a quarter, you could hold 50,000 words in the palm of your hand (and it wasn't due back in two weeks). I came to use the Library less and less, and more's the pity, for the Library was evolving into the media center of the community. The Staff was providing a dramatically greater service to the patron, despite an increasingly constricted setting.

I joined the Library Board in 1970 in the company of a distinguished set of trustees: Kenneth Gonser, Violet Young, Lenore Williams, and others. I learned that Charles Eckhart, when he founded his Library in 1910, had envisioned its need for growth and change and had handsomely endowed it for that purpose. Now years later, the prospect for such growth is real.

I have to believe that if there is a Divine Justice, then somewhere "Uncle Charley" Eckhart must know what he accomplished with his Library and that lovely old piece of Prairie architecture that contains it. He should receive some Divine Recognition for the immense good that ALL of his gifts have given his town. And... he should hear the happy shouts of children at play in settings that he enriched, and the contented murmurs of his townsfolk in his library.

Spin-offs: Snepp Snyder--35 years of quiet service YMCA

Legendary Librarians

The Fountain, a cast-iron millstone?

Useful source materials: Evening Star articles attending the 75th Anniversary re-enactment of the cornerstone ceremony. c. 1986

Bonafide footnote: Nothing on Eckhart Park? Unfortunately I didn't go to the Park much. I was a long way from West 11th Street, shanks-mare. I do remember the weed-befouled mill pond, the odd metal bridge over the creek (AND IT STILL STANDS). But, to a child, the whole world's a park.

Farewell to the Old Timer

When the McComb's Series began, I had no real consciousness of Ted's age. To be sure, he was no spring chicken; he could talk authoritatively about times before my birth; but, he wasn't "old" as "feeble, dispirited, jaded with life".

The publication of the McComb's Series came to a halt after the 24th article. Then, in response to the urging of the local librarian, I began the frustrating job of assembling them in a form suitable for re-publication, a frustrating experience that took not less than three years. In that process, I found that there were 6 more articles already written and suitable for inclusion, and a series of 70 more suitable subjects.

With the death of Ted, some of the above figures no longer apply. His collaboration of 16 of the first 30 articles is safe from loss. Unfortunately, of the remaining 70+ possible articles, Ted was the primary source of 20 of them. It is unlikely that they can be written now, or ever -- at least with the unique insights that Ted would have given them. No "Creek-side Boulevard", "Gas Town". "Cedar Street Underground Sidewalk". and "Rol Muhn Building Era", "Legends of the Early Fire Department", "Dance Halls", "Indiana Avenue Mini-Industries", and "Ted's Industrial Accident" -- All are either totally lost or with insufficient detail to allow them to be completed.

What did the collaboration with Ted accomplish? Certainly McComb's stated purpose of preserving interesting details of Auburn's past has been at least partially satisfied. One of my personal goals was to see that Ted, neglected in the Sesqui-Centennial Series, in the vaunted County History ...that Ted would get some of the recognition he deserved. I'd like to think that he did, although there was much more to appreciate about Ted than the public, reading these few articles, would do.

Are there significant facts about Ted that haven't been dwelt on? Consider: Louis Walter was born in 1842, Ted in 1903; father and son together spanned 151 years...awesome! Louis lived through 18 presidencies himself, Ted, 17. Ted, in a working career of nearly 70 years, worked for about 25 employers. He saw every bit of the infrastructure of Auburn built. He saw Auburn take on the stamp of an "auto town", a trait still with it. His family situation (wounded father and uncle, both) gave him a degree of compassion worth emulating. But most of all, I was

impressed by how very alive he was. He was robust in his enthusiasms, his expression, in his appetite for life. When he passed on, it seemed like the loss of much more than an average man. To me, he took the best memories of an age with him. Those times cannot come again; that man cannot be with us to interpret them; but, while we had him, it was a pleasure.

Farewell, old timer.

The Best Boss He Ever Had

Silas Teddy Walters had started work in the summer of 1917, at the age of 14. He worked onward through his life to the remarkable age of 84 before being forced by age and debility to retire. So ingrained in his nature was the work ethic that after 70 years at the wheel, he felt guilty because he could no longer work. He worked for over 25 bosses in his lifetime, and this author felt that he had something unique to offer in his perceptions of bosses, work, and "The Best Boss I Ever Had".

Ted's "Best Boss"? A gentleman known to thousands who lived in Auburn in the 20's, 30's and 40's--Charlie Romeiser. For starters, ALL city departments seemed to be under the direction of one superintendent--Charlie Romeiser. Mayors were truly part-time only; it was Charlie that made the City run.

Ted's connection with Charlie lay in the City Light and Water Department; Ted was the meter reader and billing department for the entire city for at least a part of his career. He not only read your meter; he figured your charges and mailed the bill to you. Here lay considerable responsibility, and also considerable opportunity to catch flack from the public. "Your husband makes coffee at midnight, and leaves a very power-hungry burner on all night. You get a larger bill for that month. The meter reader must have made a mistake."

Charlie's reaction? Listen to Ted's account, and then launch his own investigation. Faced with his negligence, the husband is charged to muzzle his enraged and accusatory wife. And, when Charlie Romeiser made such a point with you, you co-operated...or else.

No, Charlie wasn't discourteous or threatening, but he did make it plain that casual or false accusations against city employees would be investigated, and false claimants would quickly recant or face the loss of city services. Witness the incident of Ted and the German Shepherd.

In East Auburn lived a customer with little respect for the city or its workingmen. He owned a German Shepherd of abrasive nature (given him by his abrasive owner, doubtless). Ted arrived at the home on his regular monthly route, to find the owner in the company of a few of his cronies AND the dog. Due to the threatening nature of the dog, Ted was hesitant to come on the property. The owner enjoyed Ted's discomfort for a few moments, and then smirkingly assured

him it was safe. Ted quickly read the meter and was nearly off the property again when he heard one dread order, "Sic 'em!"

The dog was after Ted instantly, and attacked him in the wallet-pocket area of the seat, tearing it completely from the fairly-sturdy work pants. Verbal interplay thereafter? Ted did not comment on that; but he did report to City Hall and give the details to Charlie Romeiser.

"Go over to Schaabs and pick out the best pair of work pants. Bring me the bill."

Immediately following the execution of the above order, Charlie took Ted and they returned to East Auburn. The property owned was a bit more apprehensive with Charlie to confront. Charlie did ALL of the talking. "You will pay for the new pair of trousers for my workman. You will forevermore curb your animal." "If you are inclined to hesitate or argue at all, you will be cut off from City electricity and water immediately, and you will NOT be reconnected anytime soon. And, I will give instructions to the City Police Department to take your dog and destroy it immediately!"

Total capitulation.

"He was the best boss I ever had. You had better be right when you needed his support; but when you were, he was there behind you all the way."

It simply wasn't the money Charlie could pay you-that was small; it was the respect he gave you, and you could earn an unlimited amount. A lesson for present-day employers?

Farewell, My Old Gray Menace

A phone call from Kentucky recently informed me that a friend's Russian Blue cat, Abigail, had reached the end. Ordinarily, I'm not much moved by cats -- I had a rather "doggy" childhood, punctuated by ownership of 16 different animals and devotion to every scrap of fiction ever written about man's best friend. Then, in mid-life, I made the friendship of a lady who owned an adorable small dog and the aforementioned Abigail, whose mother must have been scared by a full bottle of Tabasco sauce. Gradually, I learned to respect Abigail (especially her claws); and after a time, even to grudgingly like the old girl. Now, I'm actually sorry at her passing; and were I there, I would have put the requisite sprig of catnip on her grave.

What, indeed was there about that cat that merited a canine fancier's affection? Well, first, she was a great bodyguard for the adorable small dog. They had their dust ups -- usually jurisdictional disputes over toys, or food dishes, or over selected knees of the owner. But, if and when outside danger threatened the dog, the cat was a more than formidable protector. On an occasion when friend Ernestine, dog, and cat were walking a few blocks from home, a large black dog hove up on the horizon with hostile intent toward Princess, the small black dog. Ernestine reined in the frightened dog and might herself have been in danger when from behind, came a small gray, fur-covered comet whose ferocity stunned and cowed the attacker. Stunned, cowed and routed the attacker, that is. I do not know if the cat actually got to the dog with those claws, but on another occasion when Bradley, the Basset hound, was attacking Sugar, (both animals of Ernestine's daughter Jenny)...well, Abigail leapt from a newell post 4' above Bradley, landed on his back, and proceeded to excavate clawsfull of hair to rather quickly reduce him to 70 pounds of quivering victim. (And, on another occasion, my sister observed Abigail back Bradley into a corner, literally, and bloody both his ears and nose.) Abigail had the number of Bradley, who outweighed her at least 10:1. So, woe betide anyone that would mess with Princess. It faced the claws of Abigail. Oh, to be sure, Abigail wasn't above taking a swipe at Princess on rare occasions, but let no other animal be so presumptuous!

Not that Abigail couldn't, at moments, be at least surprised and momentarily panicked by a bark-up from Princess. I had, on more than one occasion, a mass perforation of my knee for having had Abigail poised on that thigh when Princess barked. The cat could, of an instant, sink nearly all 20 of the claws in for purchase, and leap to safety. Healing time, about 6 weeks.

Of course, it wasn't all that often that you could get Abbie on your knee. She was not a lap cat to anyone other than her owner and Jenny, who held a nearly mystic influence over animals. The cat spent long hours on Ernestine's left thigh (Princess owned the right side). But, there was little rhyme or reason to the cat's other choices. She conferred the honor on the unlikeliest -- individuals who didn't like cats sometimes. And then, after being ignored for weeks or months on end, suddenly she would be on your lap. And, exasperatingly, sometimes she would be in the middle of the playing table during your game of cards. She rarely seemed to want anyone else's attention, other than Ernestine's, but when she wanted it, SHE WANTED IT!

There seemed to be no limitation on where the cat could or would go. You could look up from your card game to find her walking along the top of a door molding, fully 8' above the floor and on a ledge not a full inch wide. I never heard of her getting shut in a refrigerator or dresser drawer, but I am sure that she must have explored them and every other containment... and simply disdained doing anything so dumb as getting caught there.

For the most of her life, she had relative freedom to wander where she would. She was a house cat and would be back for the night, if properly whistled up. Until then, she would have explored a lovely mouse preserve behind Pat Saine's garage...or the bushes around Mrs. Cool's house. And, for a fact, she did seem to "mouse" well. And, once or twice a year, she "birded" well, as evidenced by the feathered debris left on the porch. But then, circumstances took her and her owner to live at Gardenview Apartments in Ft. Wayne, and it would have been perilous for a small-town cat to try that new environment. She was accordingly kept indoors and experienced the outside world only through the patio door glass or screen door. Circumstances again dictated a move, this time to Florence, KY and for the last 2 1/2 years of her life (17 1/2 years, all told), she was apartment bound there also. She had her excursions to the patch of sunlight on the apartment stair landing, but not again into the world of birds and mice and nature.

Moving her from one location to another had the aspects of an adventure in itself. Even a rare trip to the veterinarian was contentious and snarling and howling, howling, HOWLING!

Only Jenny could be counted on to deal with her, until the very last trip (to Florence) yielded the key. She was putting up a rare display of rancor, one which Ernestine did not wish to face for the four hours of travel time. Some happy fortune caused Ernestine to take her out of the carrier and hold her on her lap. All became serenity. For 15 years, they had not realized that it was the carrier that she hated, more than the travel!

When you face the last melancholy thought of "How will I remember her most?", with Abbie it will be as Ernestine described her very early morning ritual of the litter box, followed by an explosion into the paper grocery sack that she fancied. She must have loved the enclosed space, the rustle and rattle of the paper, and the lurking-within-and-looking-without aspect...or would it be that last time I took Ernestine back to Kentucky, and the cat clearly gave her a lecture about her absence...or *1...or *6...or *7 (below)

Abbie came into Ernestine's possession at the time of the Bicentennial in July of 1976. She was named for the sparkling Abigail Adams, and she lived up to her billing. Her owner attended a performance of the original "Cats" in London, but I don't think she saw anything superior to her Abigail in all of T. S. Eliot's cats. I suppose, not being a cat fancier myself, that there might be other distinctive cats, other cats of higher pedigree perhaps; but she was rather special to me, claws and all.

**1 Ernestine and her flotilla go for a walk*

**2 Abigail and George*

**3 Abigail and Kizzie*

**4 Abigail drinks your bath*

**5 Abigail sleeps in the crèche*

**6 Abigail sleeps on the basket in the window*

**7 Abigail and the water tap*

The Best Boss I Ever Had

In another work of this series, I have written about Ted Walters' "Best Boss". I felt that Ted's vastly varied work experience (more than 25 bosses in his 70 years of work) qualified him as some sort of authority on bosses. But then, on consideration of my own working experiences, I found that I had worked for not less than 15 high school principals, 11 superintendents of schools, and 3 other bosses in a somewhat varied work experience of my own.

Given the depth of education of those schoolmen, you might now expect one of them to be my choice; it is not so. There were among them several outstanding men, but the "pick of the litter" of bosses for me was not the product of the university, but rather an outstanding product of the school of practical experience. He was a banty of a man...a leathery little leader of the Dekalb County Highway Department, one Elmer John.

What could / did Elmer do that so impressed me? He communicated clearly. He was no product of any management schools or courses of rhetoric; he simply told it like it was, without beating around the bush. And, he told it in terms that were unmistakable.

In a world where management sometimes labors hard to conceal from its laborers the goodness of their efforts...*"Never speak well of a man you may want to fire later."* Elmer told you plainly, **AND IN THE PRESENCE OF YOUR PEERS,** if you were doing good work. Some might guess that it was a ploy to soften the fact that he had little power to reward you otherwise for good work...certainly not with money, at least, in a county job. I prefer to think otherwise, I think he was honest and candid, and that's more refreshing than it ought to be.

And, it goes without saying that, if he was open in his admiration of good work and workers, he would also be clear and direct about poorly done work. And, given his robust country background, his description of poor work and workers made the ears tingle, and surely impressed casual listeners.

I had the pleasure of working for him parts or all summers from 1950 to 1959, never for more than $1.35 an hour. I've made more, occasionally, than that since then; but I've never found his equal for loyalty to good workmen...and, incidentally, for encyclopedic knowledge of his work area. The little man could name and give salient features of EVERY ONE of the more than 750 drains, culverts, and bridges on the county road system.

That extensive system and the 30-40 workmen who seasonally attended it were his to manage... all for $4,800.00 per annum. He managed a budget of more than a third of a million dollars for such peanuts. And, when he was felled by cancer of the spine (probably the result of an injury on the job), he was replaced by a licensed engineer AND a full-time road foreman for combined salaries that likely tripled his income.

And, blessedly, he didn't look down his nose at me because I was over-educated for my summer job.

On Cousins

In another age, when families were both large and local (as contrasted to the present cautious 2.2 children *or whatever*), eventually scattering from Nome to Timbuktu, then you had cousins, seemingly on every corner. (I have an acquaintance who claims that virtually every farmstead from Bryan, Ohio back to the Indiana border contains/contained one or more of his cousins!)

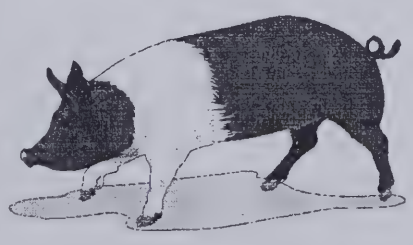
In that lovely, bygone day, we kept in much better contact with our relatives than we do now. And, children did not make a federal case out of it when required, of a Sunday afternoon, to go with their parents calling on family.

My family was strangely endowed for that day and age. On Mother's side. three siblings had produced 4,2, and 0 children, who subsequently migrated (the 4) to Garrett and Elkhart, thereby rendering themselves relatively strange relatives. Of the 2, they were much older, much married, and not much fun to visit.

But, on Father's side, three siblings had produced 0, 8, and 13 children! Now there were possibilities! My sister, Betty probably preferred to visit the Aunt in Hicksville with the 8, three of whom were girls surrounding her own age. Mother probably didn't relish these visits, her relationship with the sister-in-law being somewhat abrasive. But for Father and us kids, she went and didn't complain -- *until she got home.*

The Hicksville possibilities were generous; there was a boy cousin somewhat younger than I, but he made a suitable guide to tour the barn (My Aunt & Uncle operated a dairy, along with a poultry business. As such, the barn always offered the chance of seeing rats, or something spooky). The girls I suppose, just gabbed.

The Uncle with the 13 lived on a farm in far Fairfield Township. Now there was a feast of experience. Pig pens, barns, silos, corn cribs, a windmill, a huge *(if unkempt)* front yard... and Ory and Ralph and Dallas (Nearly my exact age, the last of these)... and all friendly and willing to help the city slicker supplement his meager knowledge of the farm.



And for a summer or two, I was even allowed to stay with them for a week. No problem for my Aunt...With that many

kids, you really wouldn't notice one more or less. It usually took less than the full week to restore my appreciation for city living., what with being awakened to the sound of grunting hogs below the window WELL BEFORE DAWN. Nothing like strange noises in strange places to restore alertness. After a week of stepping carefully when crossing the cow pasture, playing in a chaffy haymow, smelling the fermented air of the silo and sleeping like cordwood in a bed of cousins. I was ready for home and *two-to-a-bed.*

Father would collect me, we would rattle down the county line road to US 6, and return to slickerdom. Not, however, without some lasting memories, and an occasional sheep tick. Sixty years later, I still remember and wish for the taste of their well water, perpetually pumped by a windmill. I still can feel the warm coursing of wheat over my bare feet as we played in the grain bins (a no-no to be sure, but the cousins risked their father's ire to entertain me). I remember the mossy sides of the horsetank, and the emphatic NO-NO to anyone's desire to take a bath in that tank. (For, not only would you have been exposed, *au naturel*, to the public on the nearby road, but the animals would have probably refused to drink from a soap-infested tank.)

Now in the 90's. the farm is in the hands of the next generation. My Aunt and Uncle and nine of the children have passed on; but nice memories linger on. It doesn't look the same when I drive by on rare occasions. I guess I can't see the burdock, hear the pre-dawn swine symphony, or go barefoot in the country anymore.

I still have contact with the surviving cousins. and they are warm and family and generous. I'll bet they'd let me take an arthritic romp in the wheat bin even now!

A Proper Reverence for the Values of the Past

I used to quite irritated at preservationists, many of whom seemed to me to be rather inept at preserving their own appearance or good manners let alone real treasures! Eventually, I came to realize that I hadn't met the best of them, and upon looking about me, I spotted quite a few good souls that were doing the good work without reducing Dale Carnegie's principles to shambles.

Three for you then:

#1 The businessman who spared the Korean gingko tree for 27 years. Long, long before I moved onto 7th street, the late, great teacher of Auburn High, Robert Schooley, Had lived at 365 W. 7th. He it must have been who planted the unexpected tree--Korean gingkos are rarities hereabouts (the only other gingko of which I knew was at Harry Hoham's spread on N. Main Street). I reasoned that only a science teacher would have been interested in planting a tree that had survived since the Triassic era, some 190 million years ago. Eventually, Mr. Schooley's family matured and distinguished themselves, Mr. Schooley himself died, and Mrs. Schooley and daughter Betty moved away. The house occupied a valuable commercial site and paid the price of it. When an insurance company decided to build on the spot, a mature gingko tree stood too far into the lot for comfort, but upon the request of an interested party, the tree was spared (even though it virtually touched the new office building).

The owner of that insurance office is not a bonafide tree lover, but he had the uncommon good sense to honor an opinion other that his own, and so the tree survived for more than 27 more years, dropping it's leaves on the roof, clogging the gutters, and eventually invading the under-floor space and damaging the building. The damage potential was so great that the tree had to be removed, and I found myself in reluctant agreement. Additionally, I find myself also pleased that they planned to take "starts" of the tree, that it's progeny may live on elsewhere. It was a good old, "old" tree; and we were lucky to have had it this many more years.

#2 At 350 W. 7th Street, there' a historic home with an interior glory that would be hard to match. Oh, I haven't been in the home in 10 years, but I know that when the Aplin's lived there (before his Harvester job took them to Springfield, Ohio), the young couple put a tremendous

amount of time and energy into restoring, among other things, the walnut floors and the brass bathroom electric fixtures.

Mrs. Aplin asked me about removing the layers of paint, "Use paint remover." She did not follow my suggestion, for fear damage of some sort would be done the fixtures. Instead she STEEL WOOLED the batch back to a better finish than they had the day of manufacture. True...I wouldn't have done it that way, but I wouldn't have gotten those lovely results, either.

#3 I cherish a snapshot from a June day, 1901, of a family group in the front yard of what is now 6127 CR 56, north of St. Joe. A little girl of 4 sits in a child's chair in the longish grass, holding her cat on her lap. Her father, Edward Bills; her mother, Harriet Bills; and her brother and sister, Charles and Luella, make up the group. All...all have paid the price of mortality.

But, in the background stands the family home, a significant portion of which is still standing there in 1994. Of particular pleasure to me is the "gingerbread" decoration on the house peak that faces the road. Now the home of Forrest and Betty Bevington, the home receives loving attention and delights the preservationist. That gingerbread (decorative wood-open scrollwork) looks better now than it did in 1901. I cannot accurately estimate how old it may be, nor how many times it must have been lovingly removed and repaired, but SOMEONE CARED...*SEVERAL SOMEONES MUST HAVE CARED*. I doubt that it materially affected the value of the house--certainly not as much as the wing added to the west, nor the enclosure of the porch and it's inclusion into the kitchen--but still it was done.

And, in addition, the grass is neatly mowed.

Preservation? The best aspects of it for me...to spend your time, energy, money, and caring on something because of what IT was or is, rather than serving some bottom line of expediency, convenience, or profit.

Mama Misses a "Mean" Score in the Antiques Racket

Once in a great while, Fate conspires to place before the weak and tempted so attractive a chance to score that to resist is to deserve an instantly conferred sainthood. So it was, sadly, with Mama, the *Grande Dame*, and Uncle Bent's Ugly Paper Rack.

Uncle Bent was an ill-favored name in our family. He had eaten of my grandparents' provender repeatedly, and then, and then added massive insult to insufferable injury when he participated in the estate from which my grandfather, only a foster child, was excluded. Had my parents been classically educated, they'd have conferred *"persona non grata*-tude" on him. Years later, the only memory of him to be shared with us children was his paper rack -- a primitive trough made for the purpose of holding a small supply of newspapers or the like. That it was of solid cherry wood didn't help much; it WAS ugly, and no mistake!

Eventually, Mama got into the antiques game, with modest success. Then, into her "shop" (actually our home) came one day a grand dame of Auburn society. Said dame was early in her antiques collecting career, and rapidly exchanging her plenteous money for knowledge, one bad bargain at a time. She was at that moment, adventuring into primitives. She enthused over Uncle Bent's paper rack, and for a stiff $25.00, became its owner. Mother let the object go with less than little regret, being associated with the hated disinheritance.

Time passed. The Grande dame grew wiser. The phone rang. "Would Mother like the paper rack back -- I mean, if it has some sentimental appeal to Mother???" Mother was far fonder of the portraits of Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Jackson on the currency than the paper rack. "No Thanks."

Time passed. Now the paper rack appeared in the stock of Tiny's Fish Bait and Antiques (Really!), on consignment. No mistaking it either--Providence had not allowed that degree of ugly to be conferred on any other paper rack maker. Price? $25.00, but probably haggle-bait. "No thanks."

Time passes, one last time. The phone rings. A domestic of Mother's acquaintance inquires if Mother would like to buy a paper rack. "Let's see it." It is brought to the shop, and it's the surreal McCoy, itself. Price? $5.00, now. The domestic, of course, worked for the Grande dame,

and had been given the paper rack. Mother paid her $10.00--double her asking price--out of a confused conscience; and back into the stock it went.

Mother had a son of mischevieous bent. He suggested quickly that she ring up the Grande dame on the phone and breathlessly tell her that she (Mother) had located another paper rack. "Now you can have a MATCHED PAIR!" No go. Mother bought herself some sort of sainthood by refusing the temptation. Oh, what's the use of temptation if you don't give in to it now and then?

Mr. Miller Obeys the Law

In that bygone day of our great, great grandparents, life was so much less complicated--especially the plumbing. A pitcher pump at the kitchen drainboard was frequently the only plumbing convenience in the house, and it was connected to the reservoir that held the rainwater runoff from the roof.

Lacking true running water in the house, of necessity, the "necessary" (the outhouse, the "Chic Sale") would be found a discrete distance out behind the house. In an age noted for its genteel qualities, they were realistic and frank about this bodily function and community regulations required to lessen its possible nuisance factor.

Said community regulation required that each property owner have his outhouse cleaned periodically. Those who attended such functions were not granted any real status for their work, but you respected them, and you paid them well for their work. It was usually not necessary to have a town inspector to certify that the necessary work had been done. When it had not been done in appropriate time, every one fairly soon knew.

The neighbors of one Cooney Miller knew that he had not done his civic duty, and considering Cooney's sense of humor and temperament, they were likely reluctant to draw the law down on him. But, they eventually had to do so. Cooney was ordered to have his outhouse cleaned.

Cooney complied, with a vengeance. He had the structure set a bit aside, and into the noisome pit, he threw a lighted stick of dynamite. The result was a "cleaning" that was shared by everyone within a couple of hundred yards, as well as downwind!!!

Old Ted, in his telling of the tale, did not suggest any remedy to the situation that thereafter prevailed. (How DO you wash down a neighborhood?) As I heard of it, I immediately asked whether the neighbors had not then pulled the law down about Cooney's ears? "Naw," was Ted's reply, "They demanded that Cooney clean his outhouse, and he did!"

What a relief it must have been to Cooney's neighbors when indoor plumbing and community sewage systems became available!

This selection previously titled, "Cooney Miller Cleans the Outhouse"

Eating Out - Then

Sixty long years have passed since the heyday of the genuine homestyle restaurant in downtown Auburn. It has been six decades since the likes of Mrs. Thimlar's Tea Room, George Moore's (later Grace Krick's) Temple Cafe, A.D. Foust's Auburn Hotel Coffee Shop and Dining Room (a magnet for the elite), Dan Herrick's (later the 113), "Dad" Louis Shuman's (later Herman Tritch's) Auburn Diner, Donaldson's on the south side of the Square, Old Sim's at the bend on Main Street (Auburn's only black restauranteur), Van Scyock's on North Main, and Mrs. Stackhouse's (later Gardner's, then Roy Rhodes') City Cafe on West 8th Street.

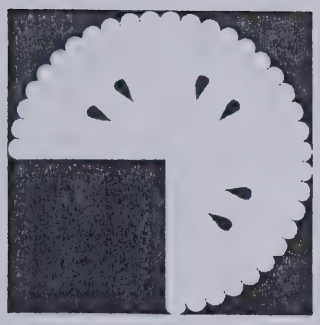
All featured "from scratch" cooking; any would have been shamed for the use of "store-bought" pies (although some did use off-premise-baked pies--someone's home kitchen). Mashed potatoes were from scratch, and since few kitchens had labor-saving peelers, the dishwasher knew what would occupy a part of her morning hours.

Bread and rolls were likely from Ed Baker's excellent bakery on North Main, delivered in the early morning. Pete Walter's and Art Haynes' dairies made morning deliveries of milk and cream, locally produced and processed. Puritan Ice Cream of Kendallville (the ancestor of today's Atz's) ran weekly routes. Green groceries were from A&P, Kroger, or Henderson & Beerbower's on 7th St. Meats were from Swartz's Market or H&B. Dry staples were from Southern Michigan Wholesale Grocery on West 7th St. Major suppliers, such as Swift, Armour, Continental, and Sexton took orders and delivered as need be.

The meats were rarely "portioned"; ham was baked on and sliced from the bone; poultry was butchered and processed on premise-at least at Auburn Diner and City Cafe.

In most establishments, the day began near 5:00 A.M. with the starting of the cooking fires, often coal stoked. Breakfast was served the early rising factory worker or businessman, and was over by 8:20. By then, Miss Armstrong would have had her fresh-squeezed lemon juice and black coffee, and the kids would soon know it. Everywhere, dinner preparation was underway. In fair weather, someone would be peeling potatoes outside the kitchen door of the Temple on Jackson Street; for the Temple, 30 to 40 pounds of potatoes took a bit of peeling.

Pies would be going into the oven, and here did the author's Mother shine. In her career, from 1928 to 1946, it is safely estimated that she made, *by hand*, in excess of 100,000. Such



mincemeat, such sugar cream, such apple--and butterscotch, and banana and coconut cream--and fresh cherry and peach in season--and strawberry and peach with whipped cream!

Any restaurant with good pie and good coffee could attract and hold a clientele. Customers timed their arrival to coincide with the delivery from the ovens of apple (Fisher West) or sugar cream (the Fredericks). Years after her retirement, former customers remembered her skills and sought just one more encore.

Her secret? Don't play with crust (after you have bound it together with the water).

There wasn't any great mystery about menus. You knew what a given establishment would serve every day of the week. At City Cafe, Monday brought ham and beans, Tuesday was meatloaf or salisbury steaks, Wednesday was baked steak, Thursday was beef stew, Friday was fried fish or macaroni 'n cheese. Saturday night saw the 25 cent chicken supper, and Sunday was the deluxe dinner: chicken rice soup, Swiss steak or fried chicken, Waldorf salad, potatoes and the appropriate gravy, vegetable, baking powder biscuits, beverage, and pie for dessert-all for 40 cents until 1940 and 50 cents thereafter. Now and again, a specialty such as leg-of-lamb or roasted fresh ham would appear; but mostly, you could count on the same good, substantial food, quickly served and reasonably priced.

Rarely did a customer disagree about price. One "lady" knowingly ordered a 15 cent ham sandwich and refused to pay but a dime for it, claiming that no ham sandwich was worth more. She was never allowed to re-enter the cafe--and she did ask.

Sadly though, time has taken its toll. Only Grace Krick's daughter, Peg Zehner of Northway Cafe, now carries the flag of real homestyle cooking. Max Sands is hale, but retired. The Diner has become a cute little park; City Cafe sells insurance and antiques; Herrick's is in the real estate business; Donaldson's purveys light bulbs. Your best hamburger, they say, is at Cricket's Tavern-not then known for it's food. Auburn has nearly 40 "eatin' places", but only 3 or 4 are within reach of a walking downtowner.

It's a bit sad. *Sic transit glorious munchies.*

The Chef Bakes the Torte

During the early days of the Depression, my mother had the good fortune to have a well-paid, steady job as first cook at the Auburn Hotel. Indeed, she might have lasted much longer in that exalted position, had not her sense of self-worth collided with the owner's draconian cuts in wages as the Depression deepened. Until that grand rupture, I ate the most prestigious lunches of any child in the Auburn school system, since a part of Mother's working arrangement was to make a lunch for me of whatever was on the menu in the Hotel Coffee Shop and/or Dining Room.

During that time, I was sort of mascot to the kitchen, and as such, met (but did not remember much about) most of the kitchen and dining room staff: Mary Reasoner, Dorothy Dannenberg, Old Tom (the custodian), Willis Jenner, the owner (A.D. Faust, himself!), his wife (Marie Hoff Faust, herself!), Dr. L. N. Geisinger (another owner, and our family doctor), and the Hungarian Chef. My "memories" are my mother's memories of that fateful three years.

The Hotel had PRETENSIONS, it did! It was THE only hostelry and restaurant in town suitable for the dignitaries of Auburn Auto or their guests, and it strained to live up to the honor; hence, a European chef, a first cook, and two dining rooms!

The first cook was an outstanding country cook *if I do say so myself!* She could do things with pie crust that are properly legendary, but she did not make "tortes" out of it! She was a whiz at meatloaf, having learned from the great Maude Gatten of the St. Joe Hotel some 20 years before! But cooking a live Maine lobster was anathema to her. "Plain and simple and plenty" were her watchwords. For the esoteric, the unpronounceable, or the mysterious...they hired the Hungarian Chef. In the hierarchy of European cooking, the Chef was God and menials jumped at his command. It didn't work quite that way in the St. Joe Valley! Mother rankled, you may be sure.

Came the day when the Chef, just at shift time of an early afternoon (when Mother should have been going home), ordered Mother to bake a cake for an evening Auburn Auto occasion. Mother asserted her rights, told him to bake it himself, and went home to her afternoon's rest. If that risked her job, Mother had ceased to care.

The Chef stooped to the task he had assigned to Mother, and had a fling at a torte. It was to have been of many layers, Viennese style. It was of many layers, but with a peculiarity. Each

layer was projected to be about 1" thick and they were, ON THEIR OUTER EDGES. Unfortunately, the middles were all rather thinner--perhaps 1/2". The total effect, when all had been united with a jam filling/binder, was not of a broad, level cylinder; but more like a Life Saver with almost no center visible.

When Mother returned to work for the supper trade, the Chef asked her to take a dozen eggs and make an icing (stiffly beaten egg whites, hot syrup, and flavoring--a delicious, very sticky, sort-of-fake-marshmallow icing). "You will have enough icing to cover all of Dekalb County if you start with whites of a dozen eggs," or words to that effect, was Mother's comment. But, she did as she was told.

The remainder of the banquet was prepared and served, and the piece de resistance was to be the cake. It was properly salvered, and headed toward the dining room when Mr. Faust himself suffered an inspiration. He had in his possession a little work of art, one of the celebrated, hand-crafted models of an Auburn car. (At times, production had not been able to keep up with demand, and to salve the impatient buyers, the precious little models were given in advance of the lagging deliveries. Such models should be valued in the thousands now.)

As the cake passed him, Mr. Faust delayed the server a bit and simply sat the model in the middle of the lake of icing--soft, gooey icing! The models were heavy, for their size. Mother hypothesized that by the time the cake reached the table, only the roofline of the model would yet be visible--sort of like cars sinking in the Tamarack Bog sinkhole, north of St. Joe, in the summer of 1912!

Mother never told what the reaction in the kitchen was to the Chef's disaster...or was it A. Donald Faust's disaster? I don't think the Chef lasted a great deal longer, but then, neither did Mother. Mr. Faust tried to cut her wages one more time, and she walked. We had her at home for a little while, and then she was hired as cook-with-no-Hungarian-Chef at the Auburn Diner by "Dad" Lewis Shuman.

I no longer ate the cuisine of the elegant (if you can imagine Mr. Faust allowing that!), but I couldn't have told the difference. Wherever I went, I was eating my mother's cooking, whatever they might bill it!

Quince Honey

As a child, I knew (as did most boys of my generation) where the best (or most accessible) fruit trees grew. I was never aware of the overt exchange of the information, one child to another, but none the less, we somehow came to know where the early transparent apples could be found, and where the ox-heart cherry tree was. Both of these were, for a fact, in the backyard of a genial neighbor, Bill Scott of W. 11th Street. But, never...never did any of us know...or even care to know...the location of any quince trees. The reason? You simply could not / did not eat a quince in hand. They were very hard, even when fully ripe; they were generally ugly, being given to strange discolorations, warts, and bumps on their banana-yellow surface; and, they were stunningly astringent. You might well have called them alum fruit!

But, in the hands of a very few jam and jelly makers, there could occur a conversion from the ridiculous to the sublime, literally. The end product, passed through such gifted hands, was quince honey. Quince honey was that sort of a perplexing product as to be simple to describe and difficult to make. It required extraordinary attention while cooking. It did!

The recipe was simple enough: just sugar, water, grated quince, and lemon juice...and slavish dedication. My mother, a gifted cook, infused it with rather more drama than necessary when she insisted that the quinces must be grated by hand--no food processor would have been allowed. But if she over exaggerated there, she was on the mark when she demanded total concentration while it cooked. From the moment it was introduced to heat, one must stir constantly. It seemed ridiculous to me, at first; but it had such a great amount of sugar compared to the water that it would burn remarkably easily. So, stir over the heat you must. And, additionally, you knew when this jam of the gods was finished by its color, and you must watch every moment for it to reach just that stage. It would begin cooking as a lemon-yellow or straw-yellow mix. As it reached boiling, gradually the grated quince would almost magically seem to disappear--they became nearly transparent in the sickening syrup. Nearing the end of cooking time, the syrup assumed much of the consistency of a good popcorn glaze, while the whole affair began to subtly shift from lemon to honey to delicate rose to a translucent pink. Then, quickly from the heat and into smallish jam glasses. As hard as the quinces were to grate, and as long as the watching and stirring had taken, you would <u>not</u> have been tempted to give it away in very

large quantities, anyhow. For that matter, I never saw my mother make more than 4 or 5 glasses of it in a batch. It was some precious!

How precious? My mother and Mayor Jerry Oren traded gourmet items; His morel mushrooms for her quince honey.

There were added results of this preparation. No matter how carefully you had tried to contain everything, there was a tendency of everything in the kitchen to seem sticky after a batch. A meticulous, dear friend of my sisters tried the recipe out this fall. She reported with delight on the success of the recipe she had used, and with woe on the condition of her previously spotless kitchen.

But then, on a given morning, you could experience heaven on your taste buds: toast and quince honey. And if you wished to admit someone to the rarest plateau of friendship, you gave them a small glass of the honey.

I knew of few other uses for the paradoxical quince. Oh, on even more rare occasions, Mother made a sort of conserve of quince very thinly sliced quinces and hard winter pears--no Bartletts for this please. In this mixture, both the tough quince slices and the tough pear slices eventually came to an al dente consistency. I never quite understood whether you were to put it on your toast, as the world's toughest marmalade; or just eat it as a hypersweet sauce.

The other use: not really much recommended. For, it came to pass on one Halloween that Mother, who had been giving the little extortioners apples for their boodle bags, ran out of apples. She turned in her exasperation, to an overabundance of quinces and dropped these into their bags. One can well imagine the carnage as the rock-hard quince, dropped from 2 feet above, hit the tender cookies. A dear old aunt, visiting us that year, remarked to her, "Hazel, when those children find out what you've given them, they're going to throw them right through your windows!" Well, they never did...and they never will, I guess.

Hand Packed Ice Cream

In the golden reaches of my youth, there was a treat that came not very often: hand packed ice cream. It was, of course, an age that saw a much smaller amount of ice cream consumed, and what we did get our palates on was usually home made. It was infrequent that we enjoyed a cone from Staman's Drug Store, rarer yet that we saw a sundae or soda, and rarest of all, hand-packed-to-be eaten-at-home. And, I must add that my family saw the ambrosian product at least as rarely as most.

In fairness, I should say that there were certainly other fine purveyors of the cold and creamy--Hubbards, Romeisers, Russells, Coscarelli, Sealtest--but for no reason that I can put a pen on, for us it was Stamans.

Expensive? Well, somewhat more so, I suppose, because it was somewhat labor intensive...not too mention nearly double the weight and contents of the ordinary. It is likely that the pint bucket held more than a quart of our modern, aerated fluff.

However it was priced, it was fascinating to watch the soda fountain man (sheer apostasy to call such an exalted position a "jerk") execute the order. First, he took a paper pail, inserted it in a metal supporting jacket, and then began filling with an ice cream spade. Several spadefuls would be put in the bucket, and then with a heavy thrust of the back of the spade, crushed to the bottom. Good-bye, air. Repeated until the bucket was truly heaping full, the top flaps of the bucket were then folded in and it was removed by an attached wire bail. No insulated carrier was needed, for it had the consistency of frozen ivory and could possibly have survived the most meandering trip home. And, once home, how far would a pint go, servings-wise? Dense as marble, it shared out pretty well.

I am forced by age and cynicism to observe, now, that a sure route to ill-fame and fortune would be to find another method of selling air for the price that modern ice cream manufacturers get for it -- until it was hand packed.

A Little Witchcraft in the Kitchen

Let darkest Africa have its witchcraft; let the tropics have their voodoo priestesses working their old smoky magic. For sheer mystery, give me the old-time "pinch 'n dab" cook anytime. And, the results were edible!

One of my grandmothers was a pinch 'n dab artist (sadly, the other could scarcely boil water). My mother vividly recounted the mystery and the achievement of that common (for the 1880's) method of cooking.

First, "What in the world do you need measurements for?" seemed to be their watchwords. Grandmother Bills began with a large flour bowl, holding perhaps 5 pounds. I suppose the only occasion when this wasn't the foundation was for a fine cake whose flour must be double sifted (and because the batter was fairly liquid) and contained in a mixing bowl. But pie crust, biscuits, noodles, dumplings, rivels...just the flour bowl. There was, of course, an even more hair-raising foundation, in which a mound of flour was piled on a breadboard and things began from this unbounded heap. Modern European chefs can yet be seen on TV gourmet shows using this method...but the cowards usually measure out the basic amount of flour they will need.

Well, now...she would make a depression in the flour, and into that put her moist ingredients. Pie crust? Probably lard first, worked to large crumbs and then united with a minimum of water and hand mixing. Such mixtures were best kept cool, and hand temperatures DID affect them if you "wooled" them about. When the dough was united, it could be lifted out on a rolling board for final forming...or balled and refrigerated (ice-boxed, that is) for future use.

No cook was going to ruin her handiwork by working too much flour into her dough while rolling things out. You could have easily converted melt-in-the-mouth cookies to hockey pucks by such a mistake, as indeed did the mother of a friend of mine. Here, indeed, was a large part of the true artistry. That cook understood...she just came to know, the textures of her recipes. She could probably have identified, blindfolded, what the final product was to be by a single touch on the dough. My own mother's superb touch with pie dough was first a matter of feel and then confirmation by sight that the crumbs of flour and shortening were just the right size to invite the water.

Secondly, the cook understood the function of each ingredient. She knew HOW sour milk and soda did their leavening together; how yeast and sugar teamed up in bread; what the various shortenings, animal or vegetable, would do to texture. She could handle baking ammonia, poisonous in itself, to produce lemon snap cookies that are now a lost art.

Thirdly, she was an athlete of the kitchen. Baking ten or more pies of a Saturday morning took stamina. Mixing, kneading, and forming 10-15-20 loaves of bread left a girl with shoulders that Nordic Track-letes might well envy. And, not rarely did she split her own wood to heat the ovens; not rarely did she do her own wash-up without aid of Kitchen Aide. And this much effort attended simply everyday life. When the threshers came, it doubled, and perhaps re-doubled.

"Still, wasn't there more 'magic' than just that?" Yep! Consider Aunt Winnifred's celebrated recipe for hickory nut cake. "Recipe?" Yes, to a point. She must have gotten in the hands of some domestic revisionist and been forced to speak in teaspoons and cups, but only so far. This vaunted cake recipe did not offer such trivialities as oven temperatures, baking time, OR FLOUR. Nor, for that matter, did my mother's celebrated Lady Baltimore cake, the pride of her family. You just knew that you added flour until "it worked well", or "it was silky" or the dough ball "thumped just ever so".

And when was it done? Why, when a BROOMSTRAW (clean!) could be inserted and come out clean.

Move Over, Escoffier...or

Great Cooks I Have Known

People gaze on my figure abundant, listen to my chatter about foods, and frequently reach a nice, logical, wrong conclusion: that I am a gourmet. Not so, me. I am truly the size that I am ("pleasingly plump", or with "fully-proportioned figure"...or even "stylishly stout"), not because of good food that I have consumed, but rather too much indifferent or downright bad food that I ate in moments of frustration or boredom. It's not that I don't know what good food is, and what a gourmet cook can do, but I'm not their willing victim to the extent that charitable friends would think.

But, of recent years, I have become an avid watcher of the TV cooking demonstration shows--the Romanolas on Italian cooking, the Frugal Gourmet (who must preach with a fry-pan in his pulpit and would do better to abandon the latter in favor of the former), Great Chefs of East/West/Southwest/Chicago/San Francisco, and even the Great Chefs of the World. Julia Child? One of the great comediennes of the world, especially after she has been to the cooking sherry and champagne too often!

But, has there been no one in my own life that was worthy of a few Michelin stars? Indeed, I think there has been:

Maude Gatten, of the St. Joe Hotel, circa 1912--who taught my mother the one truly delectable meatloaf recipe I know.

Herman Tritch, of the Auburn Diner, who took the humble hamburger and raised it to ambrosial heights--and gave his bowling team one if they won two games of an evening!

My Grandmother Harriet Onstott Bills, mistress of the flour bowl. All common baked goods were made in an unmeasured arena of flour in a large wooden bowl. Strictly "by-touch" cooking, and *witchcrafty* to watch. I never knew the lady, but would a boy's mother lie to him? Mama said she was extraordinary.

A Sister, a Sister-in-Law, and a Cousin; who apologize profusely about their baking and turn out peach pies that Julia Child could only dream about.

A revered Aunt, whose ice-box cookies and crispy butterscotch cookies remain an indelible memory more than thirty years after her demise, as does her hickory nut cake (with NO DIRECTIONS ever recorded for her amount of flour, her oven time, or her oven temperature). "A good cook would just know, now wouldn't they?"

A mere slip of a girl from Florence, KY, who can extemporize championship results for almost anything. Just sit her before a restaurant spice cabinet and watch her repair the profaned potato salad dressing; or spin up a gourmet cheese ball strictly by instinct; or prepare volcanic jalapeno pepper sauces; or turn out a peach cobbler to die for.

And her mother, whose ability to adapt recipes to her own taste--with spectacular improvement--is unmatched.

And my own mother. I'm prejudiced, of course. But she made 115,000 pies in her career as a restaurant cook. She could have made those remarkable crusts blindfolded, literally. Her mincemeat was legendary; her pumpkin pies prodigious; her butterscotch and banana or pineapple creams a pure delight on the tongue. Secrets? Don't work pie crust beyond an absolute minimum; a two crust fruit pie must stew (and bubble out, often into the oven) to be done; home made bread must bake a full hour; the toughest chicken can be gotten done quite nicely by putting clean, large spike nails between the pieces; and the best fresh fruit pies (peach, strawberry) can be done the simplest--baked crust, sugared fruit, and whipped cream, period.

Are there gourmet cooks yet to be found? Sure...try the pie bakers at Bob's in Woodburn; the whole steer hamburgers at the St. Joe Lions at the Fair; steaks at Shopoff's, on US 24 south of Ft Wayne...or at Sam's in Blakeslee.

And a parting word for my hero-chefs on TV, "You can't make my great cooks list until you forget the caviar, the mousses, the pates, the champagne sauces. Any meal that is going to cost $50 a person is show biz, not down home cookin'".

Justice Is Served...Badly?

No crime in Dekalb County annals has ever surpassed the celebrated Sheffer murders of 1922 for dramatic detail and, in the opinion of my collaborator, for flawed justice.

Perhaps the best approach now is to consult the erudite review of the crime by former Evening Star writer, Kevin Beuret, in a series of articles written in 1970. Kevin's sources were a series of flamboyent--even lurid, and THOROUGHLY PREJUDICED articles in the Waterloo Press. Kevin clearly understood the point of the Press's prejudices, but unfortunately was unable to balance these bits of yellow journalism with material from the more stable Auburn papers, owing to the lack of archives for them from 1917 to 1932. ("A progressive new force" in local publication in that era had cleaned the Auburn Printing Company files by DUMPING their "morgue." That may turn out to be a far more pernicious swipe at Auburn then the owner's snide "Good-bye, Auburn" letter.) The Star/Courier/Dispatch articles of this era must await that fortunate moment in the future when someone finds them lining the bottom of the old trunk in the attic, or suchwise.

So what has the author to add to all of this. Memories of Ted Walters "flypaper" memory, is what.

Some of the facts of the case ARE indisputable. Two Sheffer children were killed in a mysterious explosion from beneath the Sheffer kitchen at 6:30 PM, January 6, 1921. An uncle of mine, living about a block away, ran to the scene (as did many others) to aid in the rescue of survivors. Strangely, fate seems to have selected only the parents, James and Cora Sheffer to survive, if for less than 18 more months.

The center of the blast seemed to have been in a space beneath the kitchen, where the family was at dinner. Pictures of the disaster were soon common, and showed a complete demolition of the kitchen "annex", and some attendant damage to the body of the house.

Local authorities, perhaps acting on rumors, questioned James Sheffer's brother Nie, who was reputed to be estranged form James. The authorities could not even determine the cause of the explosion--gas or dynamite. The Waterloo Press would luridly refer to the cause as an "infernal machine", but the authorities found no reason to hold Nie. According to Kevin's sources, he was completely exonerated.

The lack of a resolution of the "bombing" probably fueled the vigor of the subsequent investigation of the murder of James and Cora Sheffer. The Sheffers had restored their damaged home and gone on with their lives. Then, on Thursday evening, June 22nd, the Sheffers had attended a band concert on the square. Coming home at 9:30 PM, they had just driven into their garage when an assailant stepped onto the running board of their car and fired three instantly fatal shots into James. Two more shots were fired into Cora, who would die in about 18 hours without regaining consciousness.

Authorities desperately needed a solution to this dual assault on the tranquillity of their town. An immediate reward fund of $2500 was established. Police rather quickly picked up Nie, who had moved back to Auburn and his tent near the ice plant from the Ft. Wayne Mission only days before the murders. Questioning of the suspect was fruitless, and probably, by present day standards, illegal--perhaps as much as 36 hours of continuous grilling. Nie gave them nothing; but innuendo and speculation. NEED gave them the reason to bind him over to a Grand Jury, which on October 3rd obediently indicted him for trial.

The trial was venued to Steuben County, and Nie was brought from the Allen County Jail, where an apprehensive sheriff had placed him for safety. The trial began on December 4th; the death penalty was sought. Nie had grudgingly accepted the legal representation furnished by his father, and he steadfastly refused to plead guilty. The single substantial piece of evidence against Nie was a pair of guns found buried in a creek bed near his tent. Ballistic tests were not then a part of forensic justice; ownership was never proven.

The jury seemingly had no trouble with the circumstantial evidence; they returned a verdict of "guilty of second degree murder" on December 16. Shortly thereafter, he was permitted to bid his father farewell, to tour the murder site, and to begin what was truly a life sentence. He died in prison.

And the justice of it all? Ted Walters was asked if he thought Nie had been guilty. He replied that many people were convinced of his innocence, but that the law needed a quick, settling conviction. Nie was a derelict; deaf; estranged from "good" society. He was, for that age, an ideal scapegoat.

And now? The original house still stands. Most of the principals and onlookers have gone to meet their maker. On some Divine level, justice has perhaps now been done. It didn't seem to have been done on this level in 1922.

Neighbors along 11th Street, a scant 10 years later, were willing to point out other nearby folks who had not gotten along with the Sheffers, and to express their doubts about the "justice". But, sadly, either no one cared to speak up in 1922, or -- no one cared to hear them.

The author confesses to being a shameless devotee of clever detectives, whether Miss Marple or Columbo. Surely Nie Sheffer would have benefited from their type of service, asking the important questions, "Who stood to benefit by the crime?", "Whose guns, and why so ineptly close to Nie's tent site?" "What got Father Sheffer the confidence in Nie to pay for his defense against the charge of murdering his other son, James?", "What of the known animas of a nearby family?" and "With the Waterloo Press fanning the flames of pre-judgement, how much chance of a fair trial did Nie really have?"

Death Came In Threes

Death and superstition are subjects that we small children knew little of, but older children and adults found our innocence and trust irresistible and soon filled us with fear, misgivings, and oceans of misinformation. Take the belief that, Death comes in threes! and the early 30's on Phillip Street.

Sadly, the first juvenile death that introduced us to the dreadful statistic was that of a 5 year old girl. Her mother was a driven housekeeper who did not let her three children play in the house, for fear that something would be soiled/disordered/given the "lived-in" look. Accordingly, tragedy struck in a neighbors barn, where several children had gathered to play with some tubes of rubber cement, garnered from the scrap heap at Auburn Rubber. Ignited, it burned with a garish orange flame. The little girl tried to extinguish it by stepping on it; her silk summer pajamas exploded into flame; she died at 5:00 that evening.

The anguish of her parents scarred the souls of all parents who saw it. Years afterward, they spoke of her father running on foot to an uptown drugstore to get the suffering child a glass straw so that she might assuage her thirst, as her life literally leaked out through her charred skin. Hospitals? Burn units? Not in the 1930's--Sanders Hospital would not come along for a couple of years yet.

And, in less charitable moments, we wondered if her mother might not have preferred a more disordered house and a child who could play under her watchful eye.

That death introduced us to the "Death comes in Threes" superstition; and then, the boy who lived two doors south went out to play in the tree house. That tree house would have been located almost exactly where the former Heck's store is located in West Auburn. After working diligently for his mother, cleaning a cast iron kitchen stove, he went with friends to play in the woods. He lost his grip, fell head first, and broke his neck.

Funerals in that age were held in the home. The lad, as the little girl, was laid out in the parlor amid a bank of flowers. We neighbor kids were taken by our parents to the calling and to the funeral. Two overwhelming impressions linger: His mother plaintively explaining to all that the soot from the stove was so embedded in his skin that they could not scrub his hands clean, and the dreadful incantation, "Death comes in threes".

The remainder of the summer was lived nervously by us kids as we waited for the ax to fall. It never did, and gradually faulty memories and juvenile enthusiasm freed us of t he malaise; but even yet, let two deaths occur close together and I will read the obits with a bit of foreboding.

The Little Rude Schoolhouse

In the fifth decade of this century, I was evicted from the Groves of Academe and sent to ply my trade in the boonies of education. I had no lofty goal of teaching in such metropolitan splendor as Fort Wayne...or even Auburn. I was not exactly the nubbins of my class, but I took the second job offered me, Van Buren Township, LaGrange County, teaching grades 6-12, English. True, I had trained to be a scholar of history, but all such teaching positions were held by the Toynbees of the roundball--basketball coaches! (True in most schools, but not in Van Buren Township, hereinafter known as Scott, for the hamlet in which it was embedded. In Scott, it was a nice maiden lady of such advanced years that she knew every guilty secret in the township and seemed to have been there since the last Ice age).

The class load? English 6, Reading 6, English 7 & 8 (or 8 & 7), English 9 & 10 (or 10 & 9). and English 11 & 12 (ibid.). *Revealing explanatory note: Lacking sufficient enrollment to invest a teacher in just one grade at a time (save for the large 6th grade), "double years" were taught, in which a student might very well have material presented to him in the sequence, 8, 7, 10, 9, 12, and 11. Say good-bye to any true sequential grammar.* And, oh yes; as a sop to my social studies preparation, I did have one class of History 8.

Did I ever have a class of history 8! History 8 replete with at least 50% Amish children who were totally resistant to the "round world" theory, to the conventional stimulation of good/bad grades, and to continuation of education after their 15th birthdays. I had, I say, I had Millers and Strocks galore; I had Mary Esthers and Mary Ellens and Marthas to conjure with...and an Elva and an Ella.. None of the Amish were a problem to deal with, save that when they had authority such as Ella/Elva's father, the Amish bishop, to rely on, who would then believe a teacher with such ridiculous ideas? So, I lost the round-world argument.

If they were resistant to history, they were quite receptive to English instruction. Grammar did NOT faze them, particularly when I floundered into a mechanical formula for constructing verb forms. They seemed to grasp and even enjoy (some of the, at least) being able to construct a Passive Voiced, Past Perfect Progressive: "they had been being taught" for sometime in this fashion before we finally got a text from the County Superintendent's precious

store of textbooks. Not then, but rather late thereafter, I came to wonder what (if anything) valuable I had given them. Do they now move about the placid tenor of their days noting, "I wake up. I arose from my bed...I shall do my morning chores. I have slopped the hogs. I had given the horses oats. I shall have seen the sunrise by breakfast time. I am using Mr. Stackhouse's verbs. I was coming along before I met him. I shall be forgetting all of this soon, etc., etc., etc....."

I doubt, however, that anything so demonstrated the dearth of my preparation and the height of a school's expectation as the traditional class plays. "He teaches English. He will do the plays." That possesses the same wobbly logic as saying that, "He breathes. He will play the trumpet fanfare." Maybe he does teach English surely he breathes; but, DO NOT BOOK A BROADWAY THEATER FOR ANY SUBSEQUENT EFFORT...YET!

But then, blissful ignorance reigned, and for 4 or 5 weeks, I was King of the gym. (Note: plays could not be allowed to compete with basketball for the use of the Sacred Arena, and so were either out of the way by November 1st or not on the boards until after the Sectional BB Tourneys. *And in the first 10 years of my career, my schools never survived their first game of sectional play.*

Oh, but drama looked easy. Three rehearsals of Act I, three of II, three of III, three of the entire play, one dress rehearsal, and Opening/Closing Night! The hardest part? Just holding try-outs and having to tell students that they hadn't made the cast. You could somewhat assuage their disappointment by asking them to serve as a part of the production crew, but a starring role was what they had had in mind.

You passed out the playbooks (always a non-royalty play). You required them to know an act by the first rehearsal, but in rare cases did they ever really do it. You didn't even know what "blocking" meant. You little understood dramatic structure yourself, and you cringed in later years when you came to know just how much you HADN'T KNOWN then. But, yours was the only game in town, and you were blissfully ignorant of the artistic atrocity you wrought, and YOUR PUBLIC WAS, BY THE GRACE OF A PROVIDENT GOD, YOUR EQUAL IN IGNORANCE!

On went the production! Tickets were sold, a few. Posters were made, badly. Scenery was built, rickety. And since the schools rarely paid for this UN-valuable service, the only recompense was the traditional cast-present-to-the-director. Cuff links, bric-a-brac, and (in one

case), a shirt with metallic thread-that-scratched (and made me afraid to wear it in stormy weather.)

My legacy of significant theater? Forget it. We did "Comin' Around the Mountain" and "Hillbilly Courtship" and "Second Floor Front" (The hero is a poet, set in a second floor sitting room that required a piano to be taken on and off stage between acts, replete with topical jokes of the 1910 period). As elegant as we ever got was "Seventeenth Summer" and the principal criticized because "We prefer our plays funny here at Leo!" Never did we assay to "significant ", to "redeeming social value", or to "dramatic milestone".

But...but...but. We did generally have fun. We did clean, funny, inexpensive plays. And, I quit after 10 years when I learned how far I was from good (and how far from appreciative even the larger schools were of so much extra-curricular effort.) The thrill was then gone, but some nice memories still linger on.

Memories such as:

Lois, of Appalachian background, who joyously taught all of the cast members dialect for "Hillbilly Courtship" and they loved it. It took months for them to give it up after the play had become history.

Gailanna, who sat in the audience and cried at the sad passage at the end of the second act of "Seventeenth Summer".

And Rita, the understudy/promptress, who stepped in the leading role. (ibid.), and carried it off so very well, including improvising dialogue to rescue a cast member from a missed cue.

Herb, who got trapped in an offstage room behind the piano we had moved off-set between acts.

Maynard, who deliberately ad-libbed fully 15 minutes to pad a scene with Mike E.

Joanne, who extorted a new wardrobe from her father, telling him that the director required her to have new clothes for the play.

And finally, Ginger, who answered Duane's onion-y kiss on Friday night with her own garlic kiss on Saturday night....at the director's suggestion.

Would I do it over? Not really, but I do enjoy the memories, and I still have a couple of pair of those cufflinks.

Everything Old Is New Again?

So went the title of a popular song some years back, and so goes the tenure of daily life. So often I've found that what we tout as a great new discovery is only a variation of something old and nearly forgotten. We go into orbit about food dryers, not remembering that very large, double layered, hot-water filled, drying pan that graced every home at the turn of the century. Surely, new ones are electric and forced air, but at a hefty cost, too.

So it was that I, who have acquired the immobility of the aged and arthritic, was so pleased to discover local markets that would prepare an order and put it in the trunk of my car, accepting my check through the window, and save me the misery of concrete and tile "Knee killers". And then, I remembered the shopping patterns of my ancient youth--patterns that saw only infrequent shopping expeditions to the center of the town. Quite literally, the stores came to us! The numerous peddlers and huckster wagons met us virtually at the doorways of our homes. In season, the farmer might drive slowly down the dusty streets, offering his produce (particularly muskmelons, I remember) from door to door. The egg lady came weekly, milk was delivered in glass bottles to the doorstep, usually long before the householder was stirring. The Larkin lady and the Watkins man...and the ubiquitous Fuller Brush Salesman let you shop in your very own parlor (more likely, kitchen!). Eventually, Avon came calling; and of course, you had several friends who did Knapp or Mason or other brands of footwear.

But, it was the huckster wagons that reach farthest back for me. I can recall one being horse drawn (later to be replaced by a Model-A Ford truck (with a body probably made in your own hometown, it was easy to purchase just a motor and chassis and have a local carpenter/blacksmith/handyman customize what you needed.). It was usually designed with one side having a large, horizontal shutter that could be raised to expose the stock to view. It could not be equipped with the barrels of flour, crackers, and the like of the downtown groceries, much of it had to be, in a sense, pre-packaged. It could carry no goods that would require extended refrigeration, hence little meat or dairy. Considering the roughness of the streets and the stiffness of suspension, eggs would have been in peril in such a case. But, there are still lots of staples in could and did carry. And, it brought scandalous *non-home-made* bread! In the age when household drudgery was most women's lot, the labor-intensive making of bread was a given.

But, some of the more daring foreshadowed their coming independence by buying...scandalouly buying *at 7, 8, or even 9 cents* loaves of BAKERY bread! Of course, it could not taste as good, nor be as filling, as your mother's best; but the texture was finer, the crust was thinner, and for the moment, you were on the cutting edge of technology--or were you? Soon they would slice it; wax-paper it; cinnamon-and/or raisin it and even identify it with some elegiac name--Wonder, Sunbeam, Holsum.

What finally became of the huckster wagons? Mom and pop stores cut into the business some, but the widespread ownership of cars made downtown shopping much easier, leading to larger groceries and supermarkets and hypermarkets. The wagons hung on a bit longer in rural settings and resort areas, but finding one now would be a true curiosity.

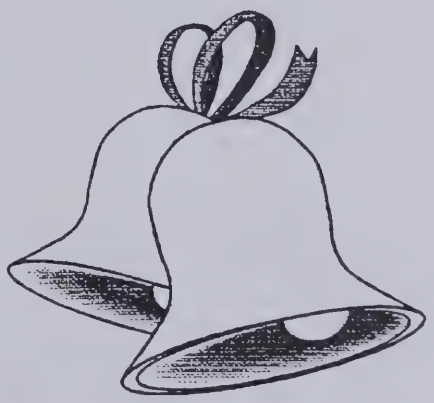
Or would it? Can't you still get an intellectual meal from the Eckhart Library Bookmobile? It's really not so much different from Christopher Moreley's horse-drawn bookstore in his charming novel, "Parnassus on Wheels". *Want a real adventure? Try finding "Parnassus" on the shelves of ANY library.*

Holiday Hoopla

I cannot really recall all of this hoopla about the Holidays in the good old days. Surely we had holidays, but I think that they were rather more possessions of the family, the church, and the patriot; rather than the toy and greeting card manufacturers. I suspect that days are all rather much the same to children: everyday a sort of holiday.

Neither can I recall any particularly ecstatic experiences with those holidays that we did note. This, perhaps, is the result of having a double molar pulled on Thanksgiving Day of 1933...not an auspicious beginning to the family feast (which was rather likely centered on one chicken divided among 6 people.)

But surely, the presents of Christmas? (Let's talk Depression days here, shall we?) Presents were few, far between, and stultifyingly practical. A dear aunt from South Bend remembered us each year, but my memory of her presents is mostly woolly itches. And, my one surviving grandparent had not less than 26 grandchildren to span; ergo, handerkercheifs.



And by golly, our schools didn't make much of holidays, either. I've no memory of coloring turkeys or pumpkins or Christmas trees to put in the classroom windows. With my talents, perhaps that's just as well. I do recall, however, in the Harrison Elementary that there was a tree located just outside of the door of Principal Della McGinnis's office. That's 12 rooms, 300 kids, and (1) one (1) tree, located where we (of the north end of the building) dare never approach (except under fearful stigma of a principal's office mandate).

Day before Christmas vacation dismissal--*C*E*R*E*M*O*N*Y*

All hands were assembled in the central hall around that tree for...for...for I don't quite remember what, except that it entailed carols, and particularly, "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing". That's 312 assembled voices AND Miss McGinnis in an avalanche of song (Well, not really an avalanche. More like 312 boulders, rocks, and pebbles bouncing down a mountainside, each at its own pace and on its own tangent, but generally headed for the bottom.)

"And Heaven and na-**chur** sing,

And Heaven and na-**chur** sing," And, she stopped us dead in our tracks, carol or no carol, for a diction lesson. Egad! Dismissal awaited!!

"No, NO, **NO**!!!!! And Heaven and nay--tyure....nay--tyure sing,"

When you have been arrested in full melodic flight by Della McGinnis, perhaps Nature could sing, but most of us were so cowed that, at best, we lip-synched it the rest of the way. And, to this day, I'll dodge that carol when I can. Nay--tyure will just have to make it on its own.

Making W. A. R. In Auburn

I can't ever recall Auburn being a hotbed of talent. Oh, I do remember one dance studio booking the Court Theater for their annual extravaganza, but there were no budding Ruby Keelers in that group, I'm afraid. (Once, one did have an accident that might have suggested a career of Gypsy Rose Lee, but they never allowed that accident to occur again, you may be sure!)

Similarly, I am sure that Catherine Cornell slept soundly knowing the competition that faced the footlights in Auburn. But, from time to time, we had momentary flickers of hope, carefully fanned to life by the Traveling Producer/Director. He came through town every few years (at long enough intervals that his last production could be lent a rosy hue by charitable memories.)

He would have in his hands the requisite scripts, usually of some vapid work that either didn't merit royalty payments or whose proper owner didn't pursue such payments. Such a script was The World's All Right!, or "W.A.R.". Did that somehow titillate the playgoer; did it somehow evoke interest in its similarity to Karel Capek's classic R.U.R? Who knows? May be it was supposed to translate to stagy, arty, avant garde. Whatever!

The casting call would go out. A few brave souls would appear for try-outs, possibly urged on by their drama or music coaches (or, could we have had Stage Mothers, even in Auburn?) I am sure that the shrewd eye of the director analyzed every aspirant for the ticket-selling potential. It was a musical, so a pianist was retained. Books were distributed, and production was underway. With a minimum of money and an avalanche of contribution, sets were built (one, usually), costumes were created (at the performer's risk), and the publicity juggernaut was set in motion.

Ads in the local paper were reasonable, but they did cost money. The promoter frequently brought with him a supply of half-printed fliers, needing only the date of the production, the theater, and price of tickets. I suspect they would be charged against the final gross at a rate very profitable to the producer. So, too, would the playbooks, a royalty fee (if he could make you believe that he actually had to pay one), and **HIS SERVICES.**

Hobe Hart rented him the theater for the performances. The practice, for which Hobe would never have given up "prime time", had to be held in lodge halls, gyms,...wherever.

Then, within a fortnight of the performance (s), the urchins of the town hit every house in town with one of the fliers. We walked and walked and walked and..... But our reward! Ah, our reward! One, count 'em, one REDUCED PRICE TICKET. Or, if we beefed too loudly, a comp ticket in the very least desirable part of the house.

Packed houses? Hardly, for it was the Depression. Profit to the sponsoring organization? Not much, after the promoter collected all of his charges, most of which would have somehow overrun.

But the priceless experience! Is to laugh! After all of that work passing out the fliers, I cannot even remember the performance. I remember the ingenue, but only because she lived next door to me on Phillip Street. (And she WAS pretty, and she was nice, and she had a nice small-town talent, and she did marry happily, I think.) The male lead? Well, he never replaced Dick Foran as my boyhood hero, so no great impression there, either. The Star was likely charitable in its review. Hollywood did not come calling. We survived it all likely no sadder, no wiser, and no more culturally enriched than we had been.

Why don't these cultural mountebanks operate throughout the land now? Possibly because the producers are now TV executives, turning out such redeeming social-value productions as Dukes of Hazzard, Beverly Hillbillies, Petticoat Junction, Green Acres, Hee Haw, and Laugh-In. Yes, that must be it!

Pin Spotter Hi-Jinx

If God had intended me to be an athlete, he wouldn't have so discouraged me by giving me a brother who could do almost everything better than I! He was the *three-sport* athlete in high school; I wilted after less than two weeks "out for football"; I didn't even hazard basketball or track.

But then, Cal Grosscop and Harry Davidson built the bowling alleys in 1937. In a fashion I came into my own. No not the star quality...but adequate performance at least. I began to bowl early--13, and I continued with a degree of pleasure and proficiency for 35 years.

Five, or six, or seven nights a week, I haunted the lanes. I bowled when I could afford it, sat pins, when allowed, to pay for my addiction, and presently became the foul caller. This was a position of some responsibility, some power, and some peril for a teenager. No one, but NO ONE, agreed with the foul caller if it had been THEIR toe that crossed the line! By the end of that career in 1942, I was the best/worst grumbled-about kid in town.

My companions in pin spotting were an interesting and instructive lot. Almost all were older than I, giving me a chance to profit by the experience of my elders: elders like "Droop", Big John, Terry the Turk, Goldie, "Bat", Lefty, and the star of stars, "Stinky".

What might I have learned? "Droop" gave me a heart stopping demonstration of double-clutching-on-ice one winter's day as we journeyed to a match game with the Calhoun Street pinspotters. It must have produced a double hernia for our guardian angels. Stinky adamantly insisted on sliding on his right foot (he was right handed), a NO-NO of Olympic proportion for a bowler....until the inevitable day when her should have broken his ankle (but only knocked himself on his backside).

And some one--or several of them--staged the infamous "Pin-Life" white-out of Auburn High School. Bowling pins suffered the inevitable wear-and-tear of being bashed about by 16 pound bowling balls. Their useful lives could be extended by mounting them on pegs about a metal funnel, and pouring over them a restorative lacquer called "Pin Life". Eventually, a layer of dried lacquer would build up on the funnel, a layer that had a most interesting quality: it would burn with a cheerful orange flame, which, if extinguished, continued to emit a dense, white smoke. DENSE...**DENSE**, that is!

How dense? Worse than the worst "pea-soup" fog. So bad, that when a chip was put in a mail box at the foot of the bowling alley stairs, it completely stopped traffic on the stairs (No one would take a chance in that "can't-see-your-nose-on-your-face" milky cloud.)

So....take a good-sized chip of Pin Life, ignite and extinguish it inside your old flip-top desk in the study hall, just as classes are changing, and get ready to call off school for the afternoon. In five minutes (before the next teacher was on the scene) the middle of the room would have disappeared. By the time superior authority had been summoned and has pontificated the situation, the large study hall was as though filled with milk, vision-wise. A school, in which continued operation was sacrosanct, ground to a complete halt.

But the peril of apprehension? Very slight likelihood, for Pin Life burnt totally and without ash, and likely without heat scars. And besides, this wasn't Hercule Poirot who was going to be looking for clues.

If it were so successful, why wasn't it done more often? Probably the perpetrators were other, bolder types, near to graduation. Most of them would have cleared the halls by mid-1940, and the remainder were not made of such adventurous stuff. I'd like to suggest that I was, but I simply wasn't; and so, I admired, but never had the nerve to emulate them.

You Can't Believe Everything You've Heard-

-Even Here!

There used to be a wry joke in my family that my older sister could remember things that had happened even before her birth. We partly attributed it to the fact that Mother had married at 16 and this sister was the firstborn, making only 18 years between their ages. My sister had a lively imagination, and likely the tendency that very imaginative children do have to easily confuse the creations of their minds with reality. When she contradicted Mother about some point of family history, it was rather more like contradicting an older sister, and I fancy that some things did seem quite real to her that were simply fancies of her lively mind.

As time went on, I found that the sister wasn't the only one to have that quirk. I had SUCH a vivid memory of my mother, in effect, being a hot car artist. Explanation? When I was about 4, Mother loaded the two youngest children in the family Model T and drove us into the country to pick cherries at an abandoned farmstead. The single structure standing was a sort of bank barn, and Mother parked the car facing the main doors. She picked; we played, rather mindlessly. Sometime during the afternoon, another party that had also been picking cherries left in their Model T. For reasons unknown to me, Mother moved our Ford from the barn to the location formerly occupied by the other party's Ford. When the time came to depart, to our surprise, we got in a Ford (ours) in a strange location. I cannot recall if I made any point of the mystery, but as years went by, I came to have a stronger and stronger feeling that my mother had stolen a car that day. Fortunately, I got old enough and smart enough before it ever occurred to me to discuss it with Mother, saving me the embarrassment of admitting my childish error. I do recall, also, a slight feeling of loss that we did not have such a colorful character in our family as Ma Barker.

In preparing this series, I found myself at times in danger of raising an eyebrow at various contributions. I tried, where I could, to cross check any of the more outlandish incidents. I found often, to my delight, that they were actually quite true as related to me. Where I had any doubt, as

in what I took to be generic industrial legends (see Orval and the Tack Hammer), I expressed my reservations to the reader.

I think the strange-story-well-verified that I most enjoyed was that of Art Smith landing in Auburn. When Ted told me of the event...and particularly landing between the Madden house and the Renaissance Corporation, up went the eyebrows. But then, from the memoirs of Willard Maxwell came the fact that his father had taken him, as a 6th birthday present, to see Art Smith land in Auburn. And then, Roger Grogg confirmed that Art Smith landed in Auburn twice! And finally, from the Art Smith memorabilia in the possession of Herbert Wertman of Portage, Michigan came a lapel tag for the occasion sponsored by the Victor Joe Cigar Company of Auburn and by candidates for auditor and sheriff in the election of 1912. Four different sources verified that on October 12, 1912, the Bird Boy did indeed land on the old baseball field on East 7th Street in Auburn. I could well believe, and report, that Ted did cajole a quarter out of his mother, Jennie Walter, and run from his home near the junction of CR40A and CR35 all the way to the field to pay, get in, and touch the plane. Ted was vivid of imagination and florid of speech, but most of his tales were verifiable.

Orval And The Tack Hammer

An Industrial Legend

In an area school of yesteryear, there was a drinking fountain known distastefully as "Old Facefull". No matter how carefully you manipulated its control, that centerflow fountain literally would give you a facefull of water. Then, mopping your brow and jowls, you would step back to enjoy the watery surprise of the next user.

Of a similar, half-humorous bent was the onlooker of Orval and his Tack Hammer, a fixture of the upholstery shop at Auburn Auto. Orval, like most upholsterers, had become adept at the use of the magnetic tack hammer, but with Orval, there was an additional difference...Orval had a wooden leg and a grisly sense of humor. He was a true peril, albeit psychological, to the unwary.

Let an unknowing greenhorn wander into the upholstery department, and Orval set his grisly joke in motion. He would feign difficulty with his pants cuff, cuss a bit, and then lean down and tack the offending cuff to his leg. The effect on the onlooker was galvanic...it often inducted fainting or nausea on the spot. Then, when the no-longer-innocent recovered from his embarrassment, he too would await the arrival of the next innocent in the department.

Orval did not, however, have the measure of every man at Auburn Auto. Orval was also a notorious tobacco sponge. Let you but whip out your pouch of Redman or Mail Pouch chewing tobacco, and Orval imposed on you for the loan of a chew, which history records would never be repaid. Orval got his comeuppance when one of his fellow workers grew tired of the sponging. In the presence of a small audience of his peers, the avenger whipped out the pouch. Like Pavlov's dog, Orval performed as expected...he asked for a chew. The chew was given, and then when Orval had his chew well under mastication, the owner of the pouch cleared his throat and spat mightily in the pouch, remarking that he always did that to keep the tobacco moist. It was said to have had a tonic effect on Orval's manners, and he was reputed to have stopped borrowing tobacco.

The stories of Orval were told me by me father, who along with several thousand other men were among the few hundred men who worked for Auburn Auto. As time went by, I came to wonder whether these tales weren't typical or common industrial legends and weren't a sort of generic humor that had taken place everywhere. Could they have been told at every plant, with just a different cast?

Perhaps the tale of the greenhorn and the anvil is one of those. This time, the setting is Auburn Rubber, in the maintenance department. The well-muscled workers are gathered around an anvil, daring each other to pick it up by the horn, one-handed, and carry it off. Consider the shape of the horn, and the weight, which might be in excess of a hundred pounds. While they were bragging, but not demonstrating their own strengths, a downy-cheeked country boy walks up, one-hand's the anvil, and walks off with it, leaving a pool of silence behind him.

And, Father told of picking up another worker and setting him down in a wheelbarrow load of fresh cement. But....now I wish I could have checked Father's overalls for cement residue, especially the seat!

Mischance on a Soft Spring Evening

As I write, it is one of those lovely, misplaced days of spring (Days such as this should be saved and metered out to us during the dreadful spells of winter). The temperature is in the low 80's, the doors are all opened; the onslaught of bugs hasn't yet begun. It's sort of like the lovely day in Raintree County when the young hero lies beneath the golden raintree on the most perfect of summer days, watching the golden rain of blossoms about him.

Well...at my age, everything reminds me of something else, and such lovely days as this take me back to the 1930's on 11th Street, and to my father and the vast (even then!) generation gap. Children, of course, understood the uses of lovely spring/summer weather and the long evenings---playtime. And if the long day of "the work of youth, play" had somewhat sated one, then perhaps your father could be prevailed upon/coaxed/wheedled/begged to take you for a ride. I don't for a fact, remember that going for a ride was all that thrilling, but on rare instances, the ice cream cone that sometimes capped the evening was. It would be, hopefully, Borden-Furness vanilla, in a rolled-cookie cone of ambrosial effect. From Stammans Drug Store, naturally.

So...the campaign would be planned. No infractions of parental law that would be reported to Dad when he got home. No yammering or sparring at the supper table. Then, spring the question and hope for fortune. On the best of evenings--perhaps three or four times a summer, it worked. Mostly it didn't because of gardening or a tough day at the factory (Father worked in maintenance at Auburn Rubber Company, and at one time, ten hours a day, seven days a week, for a straight-time 30 cents an hour! He had reason to be tired!). Or worse than a tough day, grinding valves!

It was an age when many men repaired their own cars. Most men would have considered it effete or profligate to have a filling station change their oil. Minor repairs you did at home. Quite a number of men, as was my father, were adept enough to do major repairs on their cars, also. (Now, they are so electronically complex that only your 9 year old VCR programmer could fix them!)

So, sometimes before you could even pop the question to Pop, he would have disappeared into the garage. Eventually, he would emerge carrying the 4-cylinder block to his engine (My

father was 240 pounds of solid muscle and could manage the feat without strain.). Into the house he would come, and the oily, offending, highly-encrusted-with-carbon-deposits-thing!

Braced against untoward movement, it would be situated on the table. I suppose that there must have been layers of protection between it and our table, but I don't remember--or may be I don't CARE to remember them. Then Father would take a brace-and-bit common to carpentry, put a peculiar bit in it (shaped on its end like a broadened cone, anoint the bit and the valve seats with a grinding compound, and begin the monotonous swing-reverse-swing-reverse motion that would, with a couple of evening's work, restore the valve seats to mint condition. It did take too, too, too many evenings to grind those valves. It wasted (juvenile view) too, too, too many fine evenings. From the pip-squeak point of view, it was a tragedy.

That awkward chore frequently led to other time/evening consuming repairs on the car. It seemed forever, but at long last, it could all be reassembled and tried out. Then....THEN perhaps, we could go for a ride.

Time passed. They stopped burning gasoline that did such a carbonizing number on the engines. Cylinders grew more numerous; engines more complex. Nowadays, if I heard of a man grinding his own valves, I'd wonder how he ever got them fouled to begin with, and then I'd hide myself in his garage to recapture the tragic moment from my youth. And then, I'd take myself for a ride. But, sadly, no Staman's, no Borden-Furness, no cookie cone. We just don't live "in the best of all possible worlds" anymore.

Mud Between The Toes?

A Pleasure Of My Youth

There was a lovely age when glass bottles won you a 2¢ refund if you took them back to the grocery. They did not end up, broken and waiting like a curse for the unwary "bare-foot boy". In that far off age, it was still safe--no it was absolutely mandatory to walk in the mud after a summer's rain, and barefoot, of course!

The streets, most of them, had not been disciplined with concrete or asphalt. Many had never even been graced with gravel. and those were our streets of delight. Passing traffic would, through a dry period, pulverize the surface and create the requisite potholes. Then, let fall a warm summer shower. Water and dust companionably became warm, oozy mud...a pedal paradise! No "off with the shoes" was needed--we hadn't had them on since school let out in mid-May. Into the puddles, and let that warm, wonderful mixture bring bliss between the toes. The only thing that could have improved the situation was to have had a dozen toes per foot!

"Ugh!", cry the effete! "Baloney", say I. If it is so stylish and expensive for haute Europeans to go to the spas for just such mud baths, then how absolutely clever of the American urchin to find the same pleasure, and so much cheaper!

And what other forbidden pleasures partook we of? Wait, just you wait for a scorching hot summer day--one that literally melts the tar in the road surface and makes it to trickle. Locate a pool of the quasi-molten tar, grab up a gob of it, brush off what you can of the attached sand and road debris, and there you have it, a suitable substitute for Black Jack chewing gum! Oh, it may have had a somewhat off flavor; it may have tended to polish the teeth a bit much--if you hadn't gotten out all of the sand; but you just couldn't beat the price...and it gagged the girls and your parents pretty good, too.

The Silver Marshall and Me

To this day, I don't know why my parents bought the Silver Marshall, an expensive console model radio, back there in the 1930's. We weren't poverty stricken, mind you, but THAT was a luxury, sure enough! With three kids in school (the oldest sister had by then graduated), there couldn't have been that much extra money around. (It is true that once or twice in their married lives, my parents HAD "Splurged"--a new Model T Ford *in pique, after Grandmother had let another son have the family car on the death of Grandfather*--and usually at Holiday Time when Father would come home with a turkey AFTER Mother had already purchased a chicken for the festive dinner.)

Why a new radio?

Could it have been the memories of me, going next door to the Faylors on Phillip Street and absorbing their time, peanuts, and (probably) patience while I listened enchanted to "The Burns and Allen Show". Splendid folks, the Faylors: never a complaint about the 8 year old lounge lizard, stretched out on their davenport, eating their blanched peanuts. Their children were all late-high school, or older, perhaps they missed the patter of little feet...or something.

So at 333 W. 11th. a new piece of furniture was installed in the living room...the generally cold, dark living room. The house was 1 1/2 stories, with a small crypt under part of it and heated by a kitchen stove and a massive, coal-burning, ising-glass-fronted, "pot belly" in the dining room. Such heat as made its was to the living room was incidental.

The set itself? Very darkish wood, about 3 1/2 feet high, perhaps 20 inches wide, and a foot deep. It stood on turned legs that were about 12-14 inches high...an important dimension, for they allowed the juvenile listener (me) to life on my back on the cold floor with my head and shoulders under the set. I could gaze up into the darkness at a few mysterious red glows (the vacuum tubes) and turn my imagination loose.

And, on what did the 9-year-old-and-older imagination batten? Why, to be sure, "Little Orphan Annie" (She just HAD to be a boy under that fright wig, considering the adventures she got into!), "Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy", "The Lone Ranger", "Sky King", and later on, "Sgt. Preston of the Mounties". Later in the evenings, others of the family might listen to less

exciting fare, but I always felt that I had gotten the best out the set daily, and anyone else who listened later was getting left-overs and pale stuff.

The 30's waxed into the 40's; the Silver Marshall came to 7th Street with us, and it was in action as late as '47 and '48. Now there was competition from table models, much cheaper and far more sensitive (for in the 30's we had WOWO, WLW in Cincinnati, WJR in Detroit and not a lot else (unless, like a cousin in South Bend, you went short-wave *and HE picked up the Piccard broadcast from South Dakota as they set the world record for height in a balloon ascension!* The rest of us considered it freakish good luck if we could get Pittsburgh!)

We rarely ever threw anything away, so I think Mother must have given the Silver Marshall to a step-grandson who was into radio. From there, it was involved in one of his many disastrous trades. If it exists anywhere now, nearly 50 years later, it's likely as an embarrassed liquor cabinet (After all, remember Jack Armstrong's association with that cabinet!) Sic transit glorious Silver Marshall!

I no longer lie on the floor to listen to the radio. In fact, I no longer listen to commercial radio at all. But, once in a while when a bit of static leaks out as I am push-buttoning across my FM receiver (listening for PBS), for a moment I remember again, "With a hearty "Hi yo, Silver...."

Among My Souvenirs

In a thousand dusty, undisturbed places lie little autograph albums, nostalgic, sentimental reminders of a kinder and gentler age. Memories, so lovingly entrapped in those little books, call back to us a sentimentality that would improve our age of plastic and aspirin. They were a popular item among school children, and considerable thought went into your words and considerable effort went into your handwriting, for as one may see, some of the words long outlasted their authors.

My book had been owned by one George Milner, born west of Ligonier, Indiana, in 1872. He, his sisters Olive and Eva, and the Kinnison sisters attended nearby country schools and finished their education at a Ligonier Academy. The writings were of 1882-85, and in a quality of handwriting that beggars any that you would find among today's children.

(It was an age that prided itself in its literacy, in its fluency of expression, and in its beauty of handwriting. A good friend of former years once told me of her family gathering around the circular oak dining table in the evening to practice their "fine hands" and regarding it as recreation!)

What went into the small album?

"When you get old and cannot see,
Put on you specs and think of me
Mae Kinnison, January 1885

Sometime a bit of humor?

"Forget thee, NO! I'd as soon
Forget the dinner bell at noon,
And leave the turnips, meat, and 'taters
To be devourved by hungry waiters!"
Ruth Kinnison 1883

Sometimes a melancholy thought?

"May wreaths of friendship
Encircle thy cot,
When your friend, Eva
Is dead and forget."

Eva Milner December, 1882

Sad footnote: Eva was dead within a year or so after writing this message.

Uncle George Milner grew up, graduated with impressive ceremony (in the same class as Sister Olive), taught school himself, went off to the Spanish-American War in '98, married his beloved "Billie" about 15 years later, worked as a cabinet-maker for Singer Sewing machines of South Bend, was financially ravaged by the bank collapse of the 30's, retired of ill health in the mid-40's and died in '49. In all of this while, he kept his small album.

Upon his death, Aunt Winnifred treasured the album until she passed way in '62. My mother then passed the book on to me, and I have since placed it in the hands of a family member sensitive/sentimental enough to value it as I did. For, like some beloved tintypes of family back in the 1870 era, they have the power to remind us of a kinder, gentler age.

But, the "Practical Pig" in my nature causes me to wonder yet: Where would children, living on a farm outside Ligonier, get a concept of "hungry waiters"?, and: Were turnips considered a delicacy then, or was the poet just maintaining the scansion?

"And leave the parsnips
carrots
spinach....."

Why Don't Things Taste That Good Anymore?

I read devotedly, each Wednesday morning, the pronouncements of Sandy Thorn Clark, food critic extraordinaire, of the Ft. Wayne Journal-Gazette; and I watch, sometimes twice a day, the "Great Chefs" programs on the Discovery Channel on TV. These acts cause me to now make two points to the reader: that I am NOT, I repeat, **NOT** a gourmet! (A lady once cut me from her list of luke-warm friends because I would not serve as a food critic of similar assignment an a fledgling Ft. Wayne magazine, not recognizing that I talk a much meaner menu than I ever eat!) In truth, I'm interested in the process, and the FLAMING EXCESSES of the so-called great chefs; but it does not mean that I could emulate them, nor am I competent to judge their efforts.

And the second point: that nothing they cook looks half as delicious as legend tells us the foods of the past were. But...were they? I think so.

Everyone's mother was, of course, a great cook. To a hungry child...to a ravening teenager...anyone is a great cook, yes? Benjamin Franklin had it right when he said, "Hunger is the best pickle (appetizer)". Ordinary foods, eaten with great appetite and in the presence of congenial companions (Families sometimes qualify, if there are not too many sisters!) become gourmet treats. And consider the last point seriously; if you can recall the finest meals of your life, weren't they some sort of celebratory occasion with someone you loved.

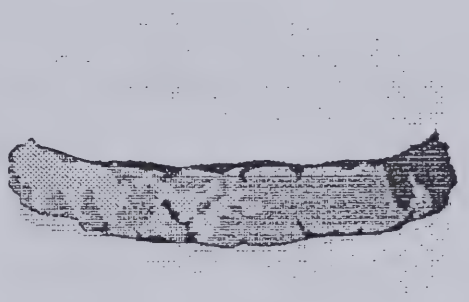
Oh, indeed, I can agree that ingredients in the old days were superior: the range-run chickens with the golden skin; "un-tin-ned" freshly grated nutmeg; vegetables FRESH from your own garden (and picked dead ripe); lard-based pie crusts; triple-sifted cake flours lovingly enfolded in strictly "from scratch" recipes; and time, TIME, **TIME** in a perfumed kitchen--all lent to a superior result.

I eat many meals alone now; the food doesn't entice me. I eat many "boxed", "store bought", "prepared" meals now, and they just don't taste like Mother's cooking.

I have virtually given up reading the pronouncements of the health authorities, who seem to tell me that everything I eat or like is bad for me. Too much reading of the "experts" (who in most cases can be counted on to hold diametrically opposite views in a further 10 years, anyhow!) is, in my unhumble opinion, worse for me.

And, sometimes, I watch the great chefs, thinking that if I cannot peel/pare away, grate away, boil away, or SAUTÉ away 90% of whatever I'm cooking, the rest can't be worth marooning on a large plate in a sea of strange sauce and thinking that the millennium, gustatorily speaking, has arrived.

But then, I return comfortable to the lasting image of the finest meal of my adolescence...and it wasn't my mother's, either. I bowled on the Auburn Diner Bowling team. Herman Tritch, owner of the Diner, pretended to understand the great advertising value his juvenile team had. So, whenever we won only one game in anevening--no reward. Two games, 10 cents in trade. Three games, 15 cents. And 15 cents would buy one of Herman's hamburgers..."Nature's most-nearly-perfect-food," and a bottle of pop. Herman would toast the bun on the grill, cook the hamburger perfectly (without benefit of McDonald's Instruction School), top it with a single perfect slice of onion, and allow us the use of the house's home-made horseradish mustard! The gods did not eat any better than that! (In Mother's restaurant hamburgers were pan fried, and simply could not compete with Herman's grill.) Of course, Herman's hamburger was eaten with Goldie and Jason and other team members...no small part of the mystique of the occasion.



(Herman, Jason, and Goldie have all gone to meet their Maker. It's worth my trudging onward just to keep the memory of those hamburgers alive.)

And yes, I do remember some...many....a myriad of good things from my mother's kitchen and restaurant and I am not alone there. One gentleman came in afternoons at four for warm apple pie and milk, knowing that Mother would have put the pies in the oven just before leaving for home and her afternoon nap. The kindly hardware owners from next door, for years after Mother gave up the restaurant, were abundant in their gratitude whenever Mother fashioned a sugar cream pie for them. The telegraph operator came on Saturday night about every 5 or 6 weeks for fried chicken livers. The Sunday dinner crowds ate her superb baking powder biscuits for 9 wonderful years, as well as the host of home-made.....TRULY HOME-MADE...pies...the butterscotch, the pumpkin, and the fabulous mincemeat. And, I came to know that there is no finer craftsman than a good home cook.

In One Century, And Out The Other?

The imminence of one of those big dates in my life (#70) causes at least two reactions on my part, one that can be commented on briefly, and the other is the subject of most of this....this....whatever. Briefly? It causes me to hope that there is no fatal exactness about the Biblical promise of "Three score and ten years" being the allotted span of man.

And, to somewhat more length, it causes me to review some of what I have seen in those 70 years of the 19th and 20th centuries. Born in 1924, you'd wonder how I was connected with the 19th Century?

Easy answer: I, and all of my age group, were raised by Victorians, parents who were of the 19th Century. When my parents raised me, as with most parents, they raised me very much as they had been raised. (Oh yes, there were some subtle changes, more education, Mother working outside the home, but their attitudes were strongly family centered, law-abiding, trusting of authority....safe, comfortable, and relatively satisfied with the status quo.)

I cannot recall when it was that I became conscious of any conflict between the world in which I lived and my parents' values. Certainly, not before we moved to 333 W. 11th in 1933. There, we still lived with the "technology" of the previous century. We heated with coal-burning cookstove and a glorious large pot-belly type stove in the dining room (and a three-burner kerosene stove in the kitchen in summer.) The kitchen stove had a reservoir for warm water; we had a rain-water cistern to supply the soft water for that reservoir. Saturday night baths were in a large, galvanized tub in the kitchen, and you shared the water serially. The house had a shingle roof, and you repaired it yourself...for a temporary reduction in the $12-per-month rent.

I don't think that we had a washing machine, yet. (Mother would be slow to return to this, for abundant reason. In the summer of 1924, very pregnant, she revolted against washing clothes in the washboard-boiling the whites-galvanized tub method. "If Father wanted clean clothes, he could get her a machine!" Father belittled (a near fatal reaction!) her characterization of the difficulties and undertook the washing the next Monday himself. It took only that one hot day to win him over.

Being the mechanical genius that all American males are, he did not spring for a washer with the attached gasoline motor. No, no. He bought his washer (motorless); installed it on the

back porch; and ran a long belt from the gasoline engine that served the well in the year. Early Rube Goldberg? Yep! Mother criticized his "economy", and fired up her "I-told-you-so" glance.

Father loaded the washer, fired up the gasoline-cum-belt arrangement, and watched with dismay as the washer was shipped off the porch and across the yard by the misaligned arrangement. Father had driven both horses and mules. I am sure that his commentary was adequate to the provocation.

For that, and perhaps economic reasons also, I have no memory of us owning a washer until the aluminum-tubbed Maytags became common. This sturdy, utilitarian machine remained in good use in our home well into the 1950's, and the last one we owned was sold to a grateful friend after 1960. It may be running yet!

Well into the 1930's, then, we washed clothes a la 19th Century.

Looking about the town in the 30's, there was plenty of 19th Century hangover. Many streets were yet dirt. In a few places on the edges of town, people still had chicken runs. There were horse hitching racks on the east side of the Court Square and on Union Street, near the old Nichols Stables (now Holben's Auto Repair). Lots of gardens were yet "hand-spaded". A very few huckster wagons prowled the streets, but they were losing ground to a host of "Mom-and-Pop" groceries.

Personally, I spaded that monstrous garden (which seemed to stretch on to Nebraska sometimes). I carried in 5 gallon buckets of coal, morning and/or night...much to the amusement of peers on the old Harrison School grounds. (I hadn't a very good aim, but a few snowballs with a lump of coal at their center eventually secured a degree of respect from them!) I carried out the buckets of ashes for city trash pick up.

I marveled at the fur buying business our next door neighbor ran---particularly when someone would bring him a live possum and he would dispatch it by whipping its skull into a utility pole. Mother thought very little of this practice and even less when the buyer's mother tried to feed me cooked possum once!

Where did the Victorian age finally seem to be overwhelmed? World War II, I'd guess. After that time, EVERYONE had to have a car. After that time, the woman working out of the home was not the exception. Soon, Dr. Spook arrived to tell us how to ruin our children, scientifically. Paris and Mary Quant stated an onslaught of women's taste that could not be

ignored and cannot be forgotten. Literature took "Amber" to be the specimen heroine of the future; poetry became spastic. Theater became "Hair-y". Melody died a dishonorable death at the hands of modern composers. (Doom would thereafter be sounded, not be Joshua's trumpets, but by an amplified guitar.) If you could understand a painting, you couldn't sell it. If you could enjoy a dish, it simply wasn't good for you.

A lot that was leisurely, gracious, gentle, kind, generous...a lot of good things either disappeared or were devalued. I personally miss melody, and holding doors open for ladies., good pictorial magazines, range-run chickens, ice-cream sodas, and ethnic jokes...and lotsa other things. I have to wonder how long into the 21st Century we will pass before someone finds our century worthy of nostalgia. I wobble at the thought that someone, someday may wax wistful over rap music, or may find our bungee-cord hemlines romantic. And, given the "advances" we've suffered in our lives, what in the world will they have left to be shocked about?

Where Do The Trains Go Now?

It is one of those nights when sleep does not "lay its leaden mace" on me--perhaps the legacy of an evening with Juan Valdez and his caffeine-toting burro--or perhaps too much stimulating event and companionship--but sleep I do not. In the dark of my bedchamber and from a great distance, I hear a memory of days past--a lonely train whistle in the night' and I wonder, "Where do the trains go now?"

When I was a child, and on very rare nights when I did not the sleep of the innocent young, I would hear train whistles in the night. A celebrated author captured all of my reaction when she noted that she never heard a train whistle but that she would gladly go wherever it was going. I never quite located the "where" that they were going, but I'd have gone too. Oh, I had played along the cinder-strewn tracks and knew such fragments of local geography as would give me Hicksville in one direction and Garrett in the other, but beyond that---mystery! I could have known that eventually the tracks ran to Chicago and Omaha and San Francisco...or Bangor or Boston or Biloxi. I could have, indeed but all I cared or dared then to know was that the line ran from the curve toward Garrett to the floating climb toward St. Joe., And so, I lay abed heard the mournful whistle and the faint-but-hypnotic clack of rails, and let the steam dragons disappear into romance and mystery and ignorance.

Now at 70, I hear lonely whistles again and feel a longing; but is it to be that child again, or is it to know where the trains in the night go?

The Future(?) Revisited

With the original *Reflections*, it was a questionable act that caused me to list potential subjects. I didn't have a very strong urge to write another set of articles. But, kind words brought me back to the word processor, and here we are. Where next? Well...in addition to the subjects listed in *Auburn Reflections* (40 remain), here are another 18 that are "fetched" from that bygone era.

1. Legends of the Auburn Hotel
2. Fruit Cellars and Cisterns
3. Mom & Pop Groceries
4. Penny Candies and Penny Pencils
5. Pumpkin and Tomato Ice Cream
6. The Tankage Company
7. Robbins Field and Auburn's Big Leaguers
8. No Less Than the Deacon--the Thread of Talent in the Scott Family
9. Erna Slagg Goes to the '93 Colombian Exposition
10. Stinky Davis and the Facts of Life
11. Prohibition Legends--Auburn and the Volstead Act
12. Ken Shulle and the Jock Teacher
13. Robert Quance and the Unkindest Cuts of Them All
14. Misinformation: Learning the Facts of Life in the '30's
15. On Being a Thoroughly Rotten Caddie
16. Ejected Forever!--the 15 cent Ham Sandwich Controversy
17. Walter, Claude, and the Ecclesiastical Clinker
18. Norm and the Rednecks
19. Honeybun's Cold, Cold Elopement, 1912
20. Auburn's Athletes for the Ages--Don Lash & Dave Williams
21. Songs Sung in Praise of the Foods of My Childhood.

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